



Masters thesis

**Power in practice: clergy workplace experiences within the  
Pentecostal assemblies of Canada**

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**POWER IN PRACTICE:  
CLERGY WORKPLACE EXPERIENCES WITHIN THE  
PENTECOSTAL ASSEMBLIES OF CANADA**

**A dissertation submitted to Middlesex University in partial fulfilment of  
the requirements for the degree of Master of Theology**

by  
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Supervised at London School of Theology  
March 2024

## Abstract

Ryan Morgan, "Power In Practice: Clergy Workplace Experiences Within The Pentecostal Assemblies Of Canada", MTh Dissertation, Middlesex University / London School of Theology, 2024

This study is the first indicative, qualitative research to explore the impact of power differentials experienced by clergy within the PAOC. A rich and varied sample of twenty-five current and former PAOC clergy were interviewed on the subject of their own lived experiences in relation to power differentials within the ecclesial system. Utilizing an inductive approach, abuse of power was not assumed as an experience; however, each participant disclosed multiple experiences of mistreatment from their superiors, resulting in significant personal harm (whether emotionally, spiritually, relationally, economically, or otherwise) as a direct result. This study analyzes and codes those experiences, and subsequently categorizes them along three major typological axes, presenting them in a ranked order of prominence. An analysis of the themes and relevant literature emerging around the research topic was also engaged; using Cameron et. al's "Four Voices of Theology" this study articulates a model of renewed praxis for power and leadership that is rooted in an intentional and applied integration of normative theological anthropology. It ultimately concludes with practical recommendations for the PAOC along with particular convictions on what constitutes an ethic of power that is faithfully Christian.

## Acknowledgements

The relatively short road of this research programme was unexpectedly lengthened several times by the sort of health emergencies that are too big, and too scary, to speak briefly about. To that end, I would like to express my most sincere appreciation to my supervisors, Mark Cartledge and Christopher Steed, for their kindness and patient support as I pressed onward.

But most especially, to my dear wife Amber, who cared for our children, the responsibilities of our household, and her exhausted husband... **thank you.** I would have given up long ago if you weren't so good at believing in me. This project possible would have been impossible without you.

Kyleigh, Maycie, AJ, Mom and Dad: Thank you for your generosity toward me (especially the sacrifice of time) so I could complete this work.

## Dedication

On May 19, 2023, the FX network aired the first of four parts in a documentary about Hillsong, the church/record-label/event-company that had become a global religious enterprise. Featuring the investigative reporting of Vanity Fair journalists David Adler and Alex French, this exposé of the embattled megachurch highlighted a long-term culture of abuse, exploitation, and image-management.<sup>1</sup> Ultimately, the documentary concluded that the power dynamics among the senior leadership at Hillsong led directly to unethical (and allegedly illegal) behaviour. This kind of revelation, of course, begs the significant question of the present ecclesial era: how could such toxicity be perpetuated for decades while worshippers looked on?<sup>2</sup> Former (and fired) Hillsong pastor, Carl Lentz,<sup>3</sup> may have provided one the answers: “Why is it hard for people to speak out against Hillsong Church? Because they’ve signed NDAs, that’s why.”<sup>4</sup>

Controlling speech (and in particular, the attempt to control the speech of current and former clergy) became a tool that, when used, directly eroded the health and integrity of this institution. A lack of accountability and the allure of expediency ultimately created an environment where abuses multiplied; cover-ups, and the associated passivity they facilitated, were simply accepted as a necessary reality for those engaged in a twenty-first century Christian mission.

It was not until my data collection was complete that I saw *The Secrets of Hillsong*, yet I could scarcely believe the parallels between several of the stories director Stacey Lee brought to the screen and the stories I had heard over the course of my interviews with PAOC pastors. While both the particulars of the history of Hillsong, and its sheer scale, are unique, the

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<sup>1</sup> Jones, “Hulu Series Shows the Gravity”.

<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the same question that the collapses of Mars Hill Church (*Christianity Today*, “Who Killed Mars Hill?”), and Willow Creek Church also prompt (Beaty, 58). The familiarity of this discussion is as disheartening as the subject itself.

<sup>3</sup> Taylor, “Carl Lentz Is Fired.”

<sup>4</sup> *Secrets of Hillsong*, “False Prophets.”

overall themes and dynamics presented in the four-part series were strikingly consistent with what I heard and observed throughout this project.

There is a holy discomfort that surfaces in the face of these sorts of revelations; for me, this led to a long look at the movement that nurtured my faith in Christ as a child and provided a community to be “my people”. It is difficult to hold the tension between the service I attended last Sunday in a PAOC church (which was so full of truth and spiritual vibrancy) and the unexpected stories of devastation that I catalogued for this project (and have also myself experienced).

In seminary, I learned that Paul’s word of choice for the ongoing sanctification of the church in Ephesians 4:12 is **καταρτισμός**.<sup>5</sup> As my professor suggested, perhaps the translations that render this word as “equip” are painting too serene a picture. Whether broken bones, or broken nets, **καταρτισμός** is the work of mending: broken, fractured, torn up... but being put back together by Christ.<sup>6</sup> That is the mending that must take place; in each believer, but especially now in the body of clergy who are also entrusted with the ministry of **καταρτισμός** themselves.

With this awareness, it is to the broken, fractured, torn up, and subsequently silenced clergy that I dedicate this work. My prayer has been that in the undertaking of this project I might, in some small way, participate in both the **καταρτισμός** of Christian ethics within my church family, as well as the **καταρτισμός** of hope within the body of our clergy. May grace and truth bring this kind of restoration and renewal, and as the Psalmist declares, may the Lord himself tend to your precious wounds.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Phonetically, this is pronounced *katartismos*.

<sup>6</sup> I am greatly indebted to the late Eugene Peterson, Professor Emeritus of Spiritual Theology at Regent College (Vancouver) for this insight.

<sup>7</sup> Ps 137:3.

## Disclaimer: Interview Confidentiality & Citations

The interviews conducted for this study are confidential, and as such the citation of interview transcripts and associated field notes omit the names of the interviewee, as per the confidentiality terms in the research consent form.

Further, as the interviews were conducted via video conference, the specific dates of each interview are withheld due to the multiple means by which participant and network computer logs, account records, and digital calendars could correlate these dates to a specific identity. As noted in chapter one, appropriate pseudonyms are used instead of participant names, and identifying details in their story (geography, names of individuals, etc.) have been redacted.

As such, citations related to the research interviews only include an interview code, such as "S1P1". To clarify the specific source, citations will either specify "Interview transcript" or "Field notes" (e.g.: Interview transcript, S2P4; Field notes, S3P2). In the case where the interview subject is clearly identified with a pseudonym, the interview code is dropped altogether in the footnote (e.g.: Interview transcript).

All participant data will be destroyed after satisfying the examiners for this study, as per the terms of the research consent form.



## List of Abbreviations

ABNWT	Alberta and Northwest Territory District of the PAOC
BCYD	BC and Yukon District of the PAOC
DE	District Executive
DLT	District Leadership Team
ESA	Employment Standards Act
EOND	Eastern Ontario and Nunavut District of the PAOC
HR	Human Resources
NDA	Non-Disclosure Agreement
NPD	Narcissistic Personality Disorder
PAOC	Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada
ROE	Record of Employment
SOET	Statement of Essential Truths (2022)
SOFET	Statement of Fundamental and Essential Truths (2018)
TAR	Theological Action Research
WOD	Western Ontario District of the PAOC

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1. Purpose of this Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of a diverse group of current and former clergy affiliated with the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC), within professional contexts marked by internal power differentials. This research is conducted to better understand the formal and informal structures of power and authority in the PAOC, their impact on members of the clergy, and to reflect upon the theological perspectives of the denomination in regard to the same.<sup>1</sup> The research question is as follows: “What are the experiences of PAOC credential-holders in regard to their relationships with other credential-holders on the subject of power and position?” This is an intentionally open-ended inquiry that does not presume the abuse of power, but rather sets out to draw insights from the descriptions provided by participants regarding their own experiences. The goal of this inquiry is to collect data that might be useful in identifying both espoused and operant theologies at work within the ecclesial system for comparison to the formal and normative voices of theology. In doing so, this study seeks to construct an account which is accurately descriptive of the current praxis of the denomination, while also providing a prescriptive framework for a theologically informed transformation stemming from rigorous critique.

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<sup>1</sup> As noted by the PAOC General Superintendent, “historically, we have resisted the word *denomination*, as for many it speaks of institutionalization and inflexible structures and tradition. While aspects of these concerns are certainly valid and are continually addressed, we do know that the external world—Christian, religious, and secular—views us as a Christian Protestant denomination within the Pentecostal and charismatic streams. For those reasons and for legal purposes, denomination is an accurate word” (Wells, ‘What We Call Ourselves’).

While this study will prefer the term *denomination* for clarity sake, when the term *fellowship* appears (especially within the internal documents of the PAOC), it should not be interpreted as “people collectively with whom a person habitually socializes or associates” (*Oxford English Dictionary*, ‘Fellowship n. 1451-1607’), but rather as the specific “spiritual communication or religious communion,” (Ibid., ‘Fellowship n. c1384’), composed of the both clergy and congregants that comprise the whole of the PAOC.

## 2. Methodology

### A. Location within the Disciplines

The need to think theologically about qualitative data, as well as the broad practices of Christian faith, led to the development of this project as an exercise in practical theology. Assuming interdisciplinarity, practical theology is especially concerned with accurately articulating the reality of a particular situation, while also reflecting on significant “connections between theology and faith practice, and between the Christian tradition and the present”,<sup>2</sup> making it the ideal discipline for a study of this kind.

Within this discipline, this particular study makes use of the Four Voices perspective in the Theological Action Research (TAR) framework presented by Helen Cameron et. al. in *Talking About God in Practice*.<sup>3</sup> The researcher shares Cameron et. al.’s conviction and commitment to:

... the idea that the research done into faith practices [ought to be] ‘theological all the way through’. This means that theology cannot appear after the data has been collected as if it were simply ‘the icing on the cake already baked in the oven of social analysis’. Rather, researchers employing [theological action research] consider all the material – written and unwritten, textual and practical – as (potentially) ‘theology’, as ‘faith seeking understanding’. This means that the practices participated in and observed are themselves bearers of theology.<sup>4</sup>

While this study is not action research, it follows in the footsteps of many other projects in practical theology that have “used the four voices outside of the TAR approach for data analysis or theological reflection”.<sup>5</sup> In this study

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<sup>2</sup> Cameron et al., 52.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 56-61.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>5</sup> Dunlop, 294; A summary of how the Four Voices approach shaped both the methodology and findings of several non-TAR projects in practical theology is described in “Using the ‘four voices of theology’ in group theological reflection,” (*Practical Theology* 14 (4): 294–308), which includes Clare Watkins’ *Disclosing Church: An Ecclesiology Learned from Conversations in Practice* (Routledge, 2020) and Jasper Bosman’s “Celebrating the Lord’s Supper in the Netherlands. A Study of Liturgical Ritual Practices in Dutch Reformed Churches,” (*Netherlands Studies in Ritual and Liturgy* 36 (December): 146–54). Dunlop specifically notes the usefulness of the Four Voices in processing complex theological scenarios and developing

the Four Voices approach provides a way of both maintaining and categorizing the theological perspectives explored within the project from start to finish. The Four Voices, and their use within this project, are summarized as follows:

**1. The Voice of Normative Theology (Scripture and Tradition)**

An assumption is made that scripture, as interpreted in alignment with the broad tradition of Christian faith, is authoritative, and thus normative.<sup>6</sup> Such perspective invites a dialectical process of healthy critique and accountability for faith practice and declaration. The reflective portions of this study appeal to the authority of the normative voice.

**2. The Voice of Formal Theology (Academic)**

Throughout Christian tradition, the formal voice has sought to articulate, discuss, and challenge the definitions of normative theology through academically informed methods of critical inquiry. The formal voice can be seen in commentaries, written theological positions and doctrinal statements prepared by trained theologians. The researcher acknowledges that this study itself represents an example of the formal voice: an academic engagement of faith-in-practice, and an attempt to provide normative critique of the espoused and operant theology of a group. The literature reviewed for this study, as well as the PAOC's official theological documents (when authored by trained theologians) further represent the formal voice within this project.<sup>7</sup>

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theological praxis, despite the Four Voices approach not being "originally envisaged as a theological reflection model," (Dunlop, 305).

<sup>6</sup> Complementing the perspective within this methodology, scriptural authority is likewise assumed by the PAOC. See Appendix 1G for a complete copy of the Statement of Essential Truths (SOET), which is the official doctrinal statement of the denomination; within the subsection "Bible", the SOET affirms the PAOC's position on scriptural authority.

<sup>7</sup> The theological documents of the PAOC include SOET, which itself is a 2022 "refresh" of the Statement of Fundamental and Essential Truths (SOFET), and reflects the denomination's current formal theological perspective. Recognizing this continuity is important for the analysis of historical clergy experiences, many of which occurred prior to 2022.



### **3. The Voice of Espoused Theology (Sermons, Articles, Conference Talks and Official Dialogue)**

The commonly articulated (or “ecclesially normative”) expression of faith represents the espoused theology of the group being studied.<sup>8</sup> Distinct from the formal voice, the espoused voice represents a group’s interpretive perspective on normative and formal voices of theology. Sermons, public presentations (e.g.: a keynote talk given by a credential-holder at a PAOC conference), informal writing (e.g.: articles in the *Pentecostal Testimony* or *Enrich* magazines), operations manuals and templates for church leadership, as well as conversational statements made in the course of one’s duties (e.g.: an admonishment from a District Superintendent, or the assertion of a particular priority by a pastor in a church staff meeting), all represent the espoused voice of theology, either broadly or locally.

### **4. The Voice of Operant Theology (Practices and Behaviours)**

Embedded within the official practices, common behavioural expressions, and actions tolerated within the community lies the operant theology of the group. In the absence of critical reflection, incongruencies between the operant voice of theology and the other voices may go unnoticed by the group. In this study, operant theology is identified through careful analysis of the common experiences expressed by research participants, and through the examination of official decisions and actions undertaken or tolerated by the PAOC as it relates to those experiences.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the clarity with which the TAR model defines the unique cadence of these Four Voices, they must not be taken to exist in singularity from one another. Rather, a key feature of the Four Voices approach is in the recognition of the interplay between the voices, and in particular, the

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<sup>8</sup> Cameron et al., 58.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 57.

symphonic quality that a disciplined application of the approach brings to theological reflection.

We must be clear that these four voices are not discrete, separate from one another; each voice is never simple. We can never hear one voice without there being echoes of the other three.<sup>10</sup>

This is especially important given that the data collected may not always fit neatly into a singular category.

Take, for example, the official theological documents of the PAOC: not all position papers list their authors or contributors, and when contributors are listed, no academic credentials are provided.<sup>11</sup> Publicly available biographical information on named contributors reveal varying levels of academic training, ranging from non-degree undergraduate ministry diplomas to doctoral degrees in theology.<sup>12</sup> As such, case-by-case discretion

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> The PAOC's position papers on "Authority" (2010) and "The Equality of Women and Men in Leadership" (2018) do not list the names of their contributors. The position papers on "Contemporary Apostles" (2002), "Contemporary Prophets and Prophecy" (2007), "Dignity of Human Life" (2001), "Miracles and Healing" (2007), and "Secret Orders" (2006) contain a list of contributors, but not their qualifications. Based on publicly available biographical information, it appears that at the time of their publication, the "Contemporary Apostles", "Contemporary Prophets and Prophecy", and "Miracles and Healings" position papers all had at least one contributor with an academic doctorate.

<sup>12</sup> The intention to include pastors and lay leaders as contributing voices in formulating official theological positions (and not only "trained theologians", per se) is a notable feature of the PAOC. This practice may be reflective of a desire to ground its perspectives within the more ordinary framework of the lay person, or it may be an extension the historical suspicion of "intellectual" voices within the movement, as demonstrated in the PAOC's 1979 *Report of the Committee on the Philosophy of Education* which states:

"We question the wisdom of expansion into more advanced education to the hazard of diverting the emphasis of our revival movement from a basically spiritual, to an intellectual one. The PAOC standards and priorities must always take precedence over those of any other [academic] accrediting body," (*Report*, 2, as cited by Hildebrandt, 160).

This position illustrates the primacy of the ministry practitioner (one who is directly engaged in the evangelistic and revival work associated with the movement's roots) as central to the PAOC's self-identity; the echoes of which are broadly evident in the General Superintendent's description of the true Pentecostal calling in his 2023 article "Aligned for Mission" which suggests that it is the missional activity of Pentecostals that serves as the unifying center of the movement (Wells, 45-46). In this light, the public perception that one has engaged faithfully in the ministry work associated with the legacy of the Pentecostal movement ultimately endows practitioners who lack formal academic training with significant authority, at least equal to trained theologians, in multiple areas of leadership (in the eyes of lay leaders and other practitioners, perhaps even more authority) and may explain the intentionality of their inclusion on formal committees tasked with theological work.

must be used when determining which official PAOC statements are indeed the voice of formal theology, and which would more accurately be categorized as the voice of espoused theology. While more recent publications, such as *Essential Truths: The PAOC Statement of Essential Truths Commentary*,<sup>13</sup> feature editors and contributors with recognized academic credentials clearly engaging in formal theological work, in other cases (such as position papers with mixed authorship and varying levels of “critical and historically and philosophically informed enquiry”),<sup>14</sup> identifying the voice can be challenging.<sup>15</sup> Thus some of the official theology of the PAOC may best be described as a mixture of formal and espoused voices claiming to be normative. Notwithstanding the significance of this dynamic in itself,<sup>16</sup> from a methodological standpoint Cameron et al. affirms that the overlapping of these categories and the presence of this type of complexity remains comfortably within the scope of the approach, where each voice is always “interrelated and overlapping”.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, therein lies the strength of this method: the Four Voices are “a device for making this complexity manageable”,<sup>18</sup> by supplying a set of lenses for exploring the theology that permeates the entire inquiry without requiring that any of the dissonances and inconsistencies (which exist in all theological systems) become something else first.

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<sup>13</sup> Johnson et al., 2023

<sup>14</sup> Cameron, et al. 58.

<sup>15</sup> In addition to contributors with varying degrees of academic training, the position papers also vary in their academic quality. For example, “Contemporary Prophets and Prophecy” (2007) prominently features engagement and commentary indicative of familiarity with the disciplines reflected in formal biblical studies; whereas “Secret Orders” (2006) makes numerous broad and unqualified statements, assumes the interpretation of fourteen different scripture references (without any context whatsoever), and appears unaware of any formal literature on the subject. As such, this collection of material is a mixed source: representation of the formal theological voice is interspersed with the espoused. Confusion may be further compounded by the genre of the documents themselves, which are intended to provide a normative critique for the operant theology of the denomination.

<sup>16</sup> The participant narratives are indicative of a broad level of confusion in regard to what constitutes normative theology. Many participants described experiences of distress related to their deconstruction of espoused theological perspectives they had unquestioningly adopted at their induction into the PAOC. This phenomenon further underscores the need to promote practices of informed theological reflection within the PAOC as a whole.

<sup>17</sup> Cameron, et al. 56.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

## **B. Limitations**

This study is designed to be indicative, not exhaustive. While the research question makes no assumption of abuse of power within the PAOC, when such experiences are recorded, they serve as indicators of the same. Notwithstanding, this study makes no claim to having engaged in an investigation of a judiciary nature, nor do the representations of participant data preclude the potential innocence of an individual named in the behaviours per se. Even when specific events are described in detail, only the participant's perspective has been captured. While the claims of participants have been verified as reasonably as possible based on their coherency, consistency with available known facts (such as dates, times, and locations), and the corroboration of other overlapping accounts within the sample, allegations of misconduct narrated by research participants were not presented to the persons named in those accounts for a response. As this is a formal academic inquiry, not a legal investigation, the overall conclusions reached are merely indicative of the need for further inquiry based on the presented findings.

## **C. Positionality of the Researcher**

The perspective of the researcher is informed by critical realism, with the belief that one cannot be entirely free of bias but must instead identify and disclose positionality. As such, the researcher discloses that he is a Canadian Christian of mixed white and indigenous ancestry; a heterosexual male of middle-class economic status, aged thirty-eight at the beginning of the project. He is an insider to the PAOC, holding clergy credentials onward from 2002, and having ministered in three PAOC Districts: Western Ontario (WOD), British Columbia and Yukon (BCYD) and Eastern Ontario (EOND). The author has familiarity with district and national personnel due to participation in multiple projects, including contract employment with the International Office (Mission Canada). The researcher's perspective is further impacted by his own experiences of power-differentials in the PAOC,

including but not limited to coercion to sign an NDA and the felt impact of misconduct by multiple PAOC clergy in leadership roles over the course of twenty years (including lying, manipulation, threatening, breach of process, and passivity upon reporting mistreatment to the proper ecclesial authorities). The longevity and diversity of the researcher's pastoral work influences his perspective regarding the potentiality of systemic versus localized dysfunction in addition to inclining him toward sympathy for young pastors who are distraught over alleged mistreatment. As a staunch egalitarian (and having mentored a number of young women who have entered pastoral roles), the researcher is likewise influenced toward greater sensitivity to reported issues of sexism. The researcher's appearance most resembles that of a white or Caucasian person, with little visual cue of his indigenous heritage, and therefore the researcher notes exceptionally limited experiences of personal racial discrimination, while also noting a broad awareness of the impact of racism on indigenous people.

In consideration of this positionality, the researcher deliberately chose a semi-structured interview format with pre-determined, open-ended questions in order to limit the influencing of interviewees based on the researcher's own bias (whether conscious or unconscious). Follow up questions were based entirely on participant answers, and the researcher made no references to his own experiences during the interview process. Participants were asked to interpret their own answers to questions for greater clarity in order to further reduce interpretation bias.

#### **D. Research Ethics**

Prior to commencement, a research proposal was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee at London School of Theology, with approval to proceed being granted on March 8, 2022.<sup>19</sup> To ensure the safety and wellbeing of participants, the interview questions and participant engagement process were screened by a registered psychotherapist with speciality in trauma and

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<sup>19</sup> See Appendix 1A for a copy of the approved Research Ethics Proposal.

religious systems prior to commencement.

## E. Analytic Approach

A general inductive approach, common in qualitative research,<sup>20</sup> was employed for data analysis. As there were no pre-supposed expectations of any particular findings, this method allowed conclusions to emerge “from the ground up, rather than handed down entirely from a theory or from the perspective of the inquirer”.<sup>21</sup> The strength of this approach is in its ability to “condense extensive and varied raw text data into a brief, summary format,” and to clearly articulate “transparent and defensible” connections between the research findings and the theories that emerge from open inquiry.<sup>22</sup> While other analytical approaches to the research question were initially evaluated (e.g.: phenomenology, narrative analysis), a general inductive approach better fits both the specific objective of this research and the need for a flexible approach toward this first academic inquiry on the subject.

David R. Thomas, in an effort to summarize the particulars of this method (which he acknowledges may be slightly less familiar to researchers than other approaches), notes that:

The general inductive approach is most similar to grounded theory but does not explicitly separate the coding process into open coding and axial coding. As well, researchers using the general inductive approach typically limit their theory building to the presentation and description of the most important categories.<sup>23</sup>

While this study did, in fact, engage both open and axial stages of coding, the focus on broad trends most relevant to the research question (and thus the necessary condition of limiting data analysis to this narrow scope) is most

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<sup>20</sup> Thomas, 238-239.

<sup>21</sup> Creswell and Poth, 22.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas., 238.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 241.

accurately described as a general inductive analysis, as opposed to pure grounded theory.<sup>24</sup>

Notwithstanding, general inductive analysis is an especially appropriate approach for this study given the location of practical theology within the “interpretive-hermeneutical paradigm”,<sup>25</sup> which seeks not to impose a particular theological assumption onto a problem, but rather to engage in some process of critical reflection.<sup>26</sup> Thus while the theories presented in this research emerge from the broad narrative represented by the complete list of codes (as opposed to a deductive-hypothesis approach),<sup>27</sup> the flexibility of a general inductive analysis allowed for a focused and thorough examination of only the most relevant themes, while yet maintaining a disciplined and methodical approach toward trustworthy conclusions.<sup>28</sup>

## **F. Selection Process and Demographics**

Participants were primarily selected from respondents to a survey inviting participation. The survey was posted in the “PAOC/NL Pastors Facebook Group” on June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022, an unofficial social media group comprised of 988 PAOC credential-holders at time of writing.<sup>29</sup> This platform was chosen for its high saturation of PAOC clergy in addition to its arm’s length distance from any official PAOC channels. Members of the group were

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<sup>24</sup> Corbin and Strauss, 11, 17; While the research subjects were asked to interpret their own experiences (these descriptions were carefully used by the researcher for code cross-comparison), and this data was used to generate the theories presented, the scope of this project included a practical limitation which precluded a formal theory verification process via second interviews. Thus while heavily influenced by grounded theory, the inability to engage “repeated interviews” for the inclusion of a detailed and critical analysis of the underlying theory (Corbin and Strauss., 11) is another significant factor in rendering the description of this project most appropriately as a general inductive analysis.

<sup>25</sup> Swinton and Mowat, 75.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 77-78; as noted, in this project the Four Voices model is used as a method for engaging in this process.

<sup>27</sup> Biggs et al., 274.

<sup>28</sup> Lincoln and Guba (1985) as cited by Thomas, 243.

<sup>29</sup> The group consisted of over 1000 members at the time the survey was posted, but has 988 members as of January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2024. A screenshot of the survey post is included as Appendix 1F with a permalink to the Facebook group URL.

given permission to share the survey link (which was public) with others outside the group, especially to those who were hard to reach (specifically, former clergy).

In order to develop a sample that is rich and varied, participants were selected not only on the basis of their interest in participation, but also on the basis of their gender, age, race, region (PAOC district), and whether they were current or former credential-holders. Due to minimal survey engagement from women, racial minorities, persons under the age of thirty, and former PAOC clergy, the researcher sought to add further diversity to the research sample by engaging in chain-referral sampling, a method useful for engaging “hard-to-reach” populations who might not identify their interest in participation due to “social stigma, concern for issues of confidentiality and fear of exposure because of possible threats to security,” or if the research relates to a sensitive topic.<sup>30</sup> Whereas traditional snowball sampling may increase the risk of sampling bias, chain-referral sampling better manages this risk by imposing additional structure onto the referral process: the researcher independently engaged multiple sources with known contacts in the hard-to-reach population and contacted their referrals directly, without disclosing to the source whether their referral had been contacted or had agreed to participate.<sup>31</sup> During interviews, participants sometimes provided the names of others who they felt should also participate in the study (this was unprompted), however no referrals from members of the sample group were interviewed at any stage of the research. A chart representing the recruitment

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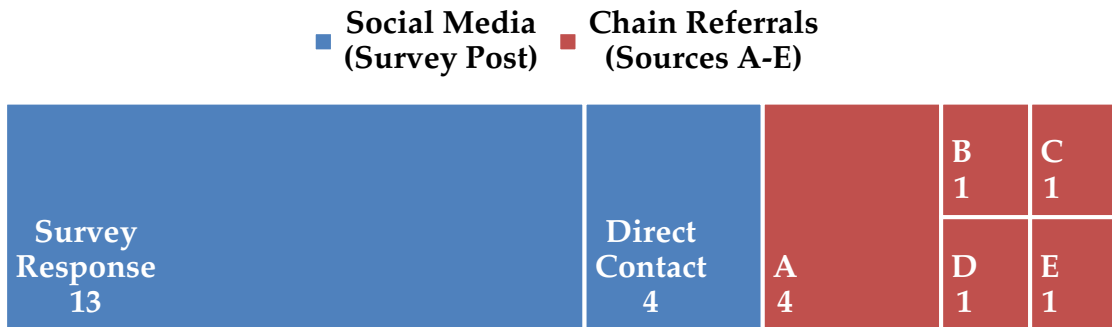
<sup>30</sup> Penrod et al., 100–101; While these concerns are cited in the context of medical research with stigmatized groups, the prominence of themes such as “fear of retaliation” and “marginalization” within the sample (see Table’s 2.1-2.3) demonstrate the need for the same level of care and sensitivity. Fear of reprisal (should their participation in this research be discovered) was most common for women, racial minorities, and young clergy. Despite the initial hesitation to be identified, these demographics were the most vocal in their support for the importance of this study, as well as in expressions of gratitude for the opportunity to participate.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*; In this study it was perceived that if those who had already participated in an interview were used to identify other potential participants, they might influence those they recruited to interpret the open-ended questions in a particular way, or perhaps sought to recruit participants whose stories intersected with their own. By using chain-referral sampling instead of snowball sampling, the integrity of the participant pool was better managed.



method of the sample group, which includes the number of participants referred from each chain-referral source, is disclosed in Figure 1.1.

**FIGURE 1.1:  
Participant Interviews by Recruitment Method<sup>32</sup>**



Interviews commenced on June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2022, and proceeded in three stages as outlined in Table 1.1. The sample pool increased in size through each stage of induction until the researcher was confident of saturation, which was first suspected after seventeen interviews, and was formally confirmed following the twenty-fifth interview.<sup>33</sup> The demographics of the sample group are provided in Table 1.2.

**TABLE 1.1:  
Interview Stages**

	Dates	Number of Interviews
<b>Stage One</b>	June 2022 – September 2022	12

<sup>32</sup> Four participants were aware of the project, and the interest survey posted to social media, but made contact with the researcher directly (rather than completing the survey) and are noted as “Direct Contact”. Of this group, three were part of the hard-to-reach population, and two indicated apprehension about completing the interest survey for privacy reasons. Participants from Chain Referral Source A were unknown to each other, without any overlapping employment, or church affiliation, but hold in common the resignation of their clergy credentials and exit from ministerial service in the PAOC.

<sup>33</sup> Saturation refers to the point at which the same themes and experiences are demonstrated consistently, with no new variations emerging. In this case, no new experience codes were generated after the seventeenth interview. In order to be assured saturation had been reached, the remaining two interviews in the second series were completed, and five more interviews were conducted in series three. These additional interviews demonstrated that saturation had indeed been achieved, while also providing a helpful thickness to the overall sample.

<b>Stage Two</b>	December 2022 – March 2023	7
<b>Stage Three</b>	April 2023 – May 2023	6

**TABLE 1.2:**  
**Research Participant Demographics**

<b>Five Views of the Sample Group</b>				
Gender	Age	PAOC District	Race	Credentials
Male: 14 (56%)	20s: 5	Maritime - 2	White - 20 (80%)	Current - 18 (72%)
Female: 11 (44%)	30s: 11	Quebec - 1	Non-White - 5 (20%)	Resigned - 6 (24%) <sup>34</sup>
	40s: 6	Eastern Ontario - 6		Never Held - 1 (4%) <sup>35</sup>
	50s: 2	Western Ontario - 5		
	60s: 1	Manitoba - 1		
		Saskatchewan - 2		
		Alberta & NWT - 3		
	BC & Yukon - 5			
Total: 25	Total: 25	Total: 25	Total: 25	Total: 25

## G. Interview Method and Results

A semi-structured interview framework, reflective of the inductive approach of this project, was designed in order to facilitate the open exploration of interview questions related to the topic (for a complete copy of the interview questions, see Appendix 1B).

The average interview lasted one hour and fifty-one minutes (1h 51m) and produced an interview transcript of 17,977 words. In total, over forty-six hours of interview recordings were captured, yielding approximately 1178 pages of single-spaced 12 point transcript. Notes, taken by the researcher

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<sup>34</sup> To preserve the integrity of this study, only those who resigned their credentials were eligible to participate. Respondents who had their credentials revoked due to a disciplinary process were excluded.

<sup>35</sup> Due to a misunderstanding in the intake process, one participant was inducted for interview who had never held clergy credentials, despite serving for over fifteen years in significant ministerial roles with the PAOC. Following consultation with the researcher's supervisor, this interview was nonetheless included in the sample due to its material value, with this disclaimer provided as notice of the irregularity.

during the interviews were also used in this project. For a sample interview transcript, see Appendix 1C.

## **H. Confidentiality and Data Retention**

In keeping with generally accepted practices of qualitative research, and the guidelines established by the Research Ethics Committee at London School of Theology, all participant data will be destroyed after satisfying the examiners of this study.

Pseudonyms are used to refer to all research participants in this study, and identifiable information has been redacted from their narratives. While the integrity and meaning of their experiences have been carefully preserved, in order to ensure confidentiality, any specific places, names, dates, or other details that could be associated with their identity have been modified or redacted prior to submission for examination. A copy of the Research Information Sheet, which includes confidentiality parameters, is included in Appendix 1D.

## **I. Cooperation with the PAOC**

The sensitivity of this research topic must be noted. Open-ended inquiries, such as this one, come with the risk that the answers recorded may not always present an institution in a favourable light. Therefore, as a matter of integrity and courtesy, the researcher engaged early on in a dialogue with the national leadership of the PAOC to share the focus of this study and discuss its potential implications (see Appendix 1E).

The PAOC was a cooperative partner in this project, endorsing the value of the study, providing credential-change data, and inviting publication of the completed study in order to further assist the working group on abuse of power with their mandate.

### 3. Context and Background

#### A. The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada

This study on power dynamics between members of the clergy initially emerged from a desire to study the impact of formal theology on operant (or “lived out”) theology; in particular, how a group’s understanding of theological anthropology impacted the way they treated one another (interpersonal ethics) was of interest. The PAOC provides a remarkable context to examine this phenomenon. Unlike other denominations with lengthy doctrinal statements, the PAOC’s recently updated “Statement of Essential Truths” (SOET) is a mere 1067 words,<sup>36</sup> with the majority of text spent in sections on “The Triune God”, “Salvation”, and “Spirit Baptism”.<sup>37</sup> Only twenty-two words are devoted to the expression of what it means to be a human being, and these are buried in a larger section on the doctrine of all creation:

Formed in the image of God, both male and female, humankind is entrusted with the care of God’s creation as faithful stewards.<sup>38</sup>

This sentence, true to the document title, conveys several “essential truths”, namely that humans are made in God’s image, as male and female, and possess an immutable vocational calling. While this statement succeeds in being both accurate and reflective of the broad theological tradition within which the PAOC finds itself, its brevity requires denominational adherents to provide their own interpretive framework and a contextual understanding of important concepts (e.g.: image-bearing). Further discussion on humanity is limited to the text of Article 6, “Positions and Practices” of the PAOC General

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<sup>36</sup> Excluding references. As noted, a copy of the SOET document (inclusive of Article 6), is included as Appendix 1G. As SOET does not have section or line numbers that can be referenced, to aid in clarity, all citations of the SOET will include the document page number and a short reference to the subsection header.

<sup>37</sup> 181 words, 166 words, and 116 words respectively.

<sup>38</sup> SOET, 2: “Creation”.

Constitution, which introduces one new anthropological statement from the previous version:

We believe in the biblical teaching of God's original and ongoing design for humanity as two distinct sexes, male and female, determined by genetics.<sup>39</sup>

Notwithstanding the potential challenge of deference to genetics in a theological document,<sup>40</sup> this statement adds some dimensionality to the earlier position; whatever human beings are, at the very least the God who made them in his image was intentional about their form.

## **B. Theological Anthropology**

It is noteworthy that while other doctrinal statements in the SOET feature further explanatory and interpretive material, these attempts at a theological anthropology do not. Of course, doctrinal statements are, by their nature, reductive: they aim to squeeze exhaustive material into a form that is clear and succinct for common use, while yet remaining truthful. Often, the determinate factor for the length or thoroughness of a particular section in a doctrinal statement has been the level of controversy (or lack thereof) around the subject. Historically, as the church has navigated conflict over particular tenets of faith, doctrinal statements have been revised and expanded as needed (for example, the Nicene Creed's expanded emphasis on Christ's divinity in the face of Arian controversy).<sup>41</sup> Reading the SOET through this historical lens, it would appear then that theological anthropology was neither a controversial nor particularly urgent subject to be reflected upon

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<sup>39</sup> SOET, 4: "Article 6.4".

<sup>40</sup> It was noted publicly, by the researcher, in his comments from the floor during open discussion at the 2022 General Conference that there are a variety of genetic anomalies that might make sexual differentiation difficult, including conditions where genetic testing returns with data at variance of typical "XX" or "XY" chromosomes. While rare, these conditions are well documented, and thus the author suggested appealing to genetics as authoritative in this matter is not only insufficient, but wholly inappropriate (giving consideration to the educational disciplines of the authors, who are theologians and not biologists).

<sup>41</sup> Shelley and Shelley, 131.

during the refreshing of the statement. An examination of the official SOET commentary, released in 2023, confirms that the pressing issue at the time of the revision was a “concern for creation care”,<sup>42</sup> and that with this perspective, the material was indeed intentionally reorganized to be less human-centric:

This repeated focus on the whole creation, and the location of previously separate confessions about humanity, angels, and sin under Creation, puts more emphasis on God as Creator and on his work with all of creation, shifting SOET from an anthropocentric to a more broadly creational perspective.<sup>43</sup>

In general, it would be fair to critique the doctrinal anthropology of the PAOC as primarily a functional tool in the service of revival and evangelism activity; it is chiefly concerned with articulating humanity’s sinfulness and the need for salvation.

While it could be noted that the PAOC’s 2001 position paper, “Dignity of Human Life” makes uncharacteristically strong anthropological declarations,<sup>44</sup> these statements are functionally tied to an argument against abortion and seem to represent the espoused theology of the PAOC regarding a specific social issue rather than the formal theology of the denomination more broadly.

### **C. Abuse of Power**

Simultaneous to the theological committee’s work on the updated SOET, complaints of unaddressed abuses of power (allegedly perpetuated by PAOC clergy in positions of authority onto their subordinates) had also prompted the formation of a special working group. Tasked with providing recommendations to the General Executive, the “Working Group on Abuse of

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<sup>42</sup> Van Johnson, et al., 24.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.; Notwithstanding the ecological priority reflected in the refreshed SOET, the updated statement is still an improvement over its predecessor, SOFET (Statement of Fundamental and Essential Truths, 2014), which contains a statement on humanity even less robust.

<sup>44</sup> See Section 1, “The Human Person: Created in the Image of God,” (1-2).

Power” contributed to the development of Resolution 20, presented at a special general meeting on April 21, 2022, and proposing that “abuse of power or authority” should be added to By-Law 10.6.2.1.1.3 as an example of a moral or ethical failure that disqualifies a pastor from ministry.<sup>45</sup> The vote to adopt the resolution passed; a milestone that occurred just weeks prior to the adoption of the updated SOET at the 55th General Conference in Winnipeg.

The proximity of these two moments underscores the significance of the intersection between theological anthropology and interpersonal ethics. To use the language of the Four Voices, it underscores the importance of a dialectic theological model where operant theology emerges from a reflective process. The relationship between a doctrinal statement that pays minimal attention to theological anthropology, and a corresponding organizational culture with a reactionary amendment regarding abuse of power, forms the context of this study.

#### **D. The Cost of Dissonance**

As the data will show, an integrated application of the PAOC’s doctrinal statements on anthropology, as minimal as they are, are conspicuously missing from the events described by the research participants in regard to their experiences. The frequency and magnitude of the grievances expressed within the sample group over mistreatment further imply that, at the very least, there is a dissonance between normative and operant theological anthropology within the denomination.

Whether these problems proceed from a lack of formal emphasis on intrinsic human value, a distorted understanding of hierarchy and submission, or merely the absence of metrics for calculating the human impact of key decisions, the costs of the behaviours that have been documented in this study are immense. While individual clergy who have experienced serious harm at the hands of leadership must navigate the impact of such a profound betrayal, the entirety of the constituency likewise bears a

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<sup>45</sup> PAOC, *Special Meeting of the General Conference*, 22-25.

cost. The relationship between clergy wellbeing and an overall decline in the number of clergy in service raises significant questions about future sustainability, should these problems go unaddressed. It is therefore the goal of this study to present an informed theological reflection on the data collected as the basis of a model for renewed praxis.



# Chapter 2: Findings

## 1. Chapter Overview

The volume of this data and the sensitivity of the subject factor into the task of presenting an account of its collective meaning. Generalizing and abridging complex experiences that were (in many cases) shared for the very first time, often punctuated with tears, without somehow violating a sacred trust is a difficult task. In order to honour these narratives while simultaneously engaging in critical analysis of their content and their overlapping themes, the researcher has endeavoured to include as many summaries and direct quotes as can be manageably contained within this chapter. In reference to the Four Voices, the descriptions of experiences marked by power differentials recounted in this study are a way of accessing the operant voice of theology in the PAOC. Collectively, these narratives provide a way to observe how empowered clergy have actually acted,<sup>46</sup> and in doing so they reveal something about the way espoused and formal theological views are, or are not, integrated into practice.<sup>47</sup>

The descriptions of events and experiences documented here stem from a simple, open-ended question: "Have you had any significant experiences you could share with me?"<sup>48</sup> The experiences recounted were carefully coded with an appropriate descriptor to allow for a cross-comparison of like events throughout the sample. The coded experiences are further organized according to categories taken from Christopher Steed's 2017 book, *Smart Leadership - Wise Leadership: indifference, inequality, and indignity*.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Throughout this study, the term "empowered clergy" is used to describe ministers who were in a position of power over another. The term "subordinate clergy" is used as a corresponding indicator of a minister who was not in a position of power.

<sup>47</sup> As Cameron et al. emphasizes, even when actions appear to lack embedded theology, this is itself an operant theology that must be examined (54-55, 60-61).

<sup>48</sup> See Appendix 1B.

<sup>49</sup> Steed, 88; In keeping with the methodological parameters of this research, an inductive approach was maintained throughout the process of interviewing and coding. Steed's

The complete list of codes are provided in Tables 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3, and include short definitions.<sup>50</sup> The frequency of common experiences, tracked across the entire sample, allows these codes to be ranked and listed in an order that reflects their prominence. Factors such as the magnitude of an experience and the personal impact of the event are considered in the ranking process.<sup>51</sup> It is important to note that this ranking does not represent a strictly mathematical analysis, as making such a calculation from qualitative data would be impractical. Challenges such as overlapping occurrences of the same code within an interview, and the roles played by multiple persons would make a purely quantitative ranking of experiences misleading. The rankings provided in the tables should therefore be used as indicators of the types of experiences clergy endure, and their occurrence within the sample (while also recognizing that a single, complex event can have multiple codes). A quantitative analysis of the suspected frequencies of these types of experiences across the entire PAOC clergy-base remains a project for future researchers, and is not speculated here. While all data, down to the smallest detail, is significant,<sup>52</sup> what follows is a carefully arranged presentation and analysis of the data with special attention given to the codes that bear particular significance within the theme and scope of the research question.

As a preface to this material, a short analysis of declining clergy numbers in the PAOC is provided. Finally, despite being far less prominent than other codes, a special note on illegal behaviour with a corresponding table of codes (Table 2.4) is included prior to the chapter conclusion, as the seriousness of this material necessitates specific mention.

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categories were identified as a compatible and effective means of organizing the findings subsequent to the coding and analysis being completed.

<sup>50</sup> This naming and defining of experiences is central to the work of this project. As Cameron et al. notes, embedded in practical theology is the, “discovering and forming [of] language for the often hidden depths of what [is observed]. This language – or naming – enables better the necessary conversation between embodied and formal or normative theologies; and it makes possible a wider sharing of the meanings made real in practical Christian faith” (61).

<sup>51</sup> For example, experiencing a singular berating comment versus repetitive instances of the same for months, or the severity of an experience as interpreted by the participant.

<sup>52</sup> Both from a methodological standpoint as well as from the personal standpoint of the research participants.

## 2. An Autopsy of Declining Clergy Retention

### A. PAOC Clergy Changes, 2017-2022

The term “clergy crisis” is ubiquitous with declining bible college and seminary enrolments, and the dwindling enthusiasm of young pastors within once vibrant evangelical movements; both challenges are well-documented realities facing the PAOC.<sup>53</sup> As published in the PAOC’s 2022 “Fellowship Statistics” report, during the five-year period from 2017-2022 the total number of active clergy in the PAOC decreased by 259, or roughly 7.5% overall.<sup>54</sup> Compared against Canada’s total population growth of 7.5% over the same period,<sup>55</sup> it is reasonable to surmise that the largest Pentecostal movement in Canada is indeed facing a concerning shortage of clergy that shows no sign of immediate improvement. When discussing the causes of this problem, low enrolment in denominational schools is commonly expressed as the primary factor,<sup>56</sup> with generational shifts in values earning an honourable mention.<sup>57</sup> A basic analysis of the data in the PAOC Credential Change Reports casts significant doubt on these assumptions.

As Figure 2.1 illustrates, when comparing new credentials issued versus the number of clergy lost to either death or dismissal during this five-year period, the PAOC achieved a net gain of 335 clergy.<sup>58</sup> On its own, this would represent a 9% gain, which would have exceeded population growth over the same time period if it were the only factor.

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<sup>53</sup> Wilkinson and Ambrose, 252.

<sup>54</sup> PAOC, “2022 Fellowship Statistics”, 1.

<sup>55</sup> Statistics Canada, “Canadian Population Estimates, 2017-2022”.

<sup>56</sup> Wilkinson and Ambrose, *Ibid.*; Private source.

<sup>57</sup> Often rooted in an uncritical extrapolation of Millennial and Gen-Z church-attendance data, assertions are made that younger Christians are less likely to value pastoral work, at least in its present form. See Erlacher and White, 86-87.

<sup>58</sup> Dismissal refers to clergy whose credentials are revoked for disciplinary reasons.

**FIGURE 2.1:  
PAOC Clergy Credential Changes, 2017-2022<sup>59</sup>**



In contrast, over the same period the number of existing credential-holders who moved to inactive status, resigned credentials, or lapsed (non-renewal), massively outweighed the number of clergy who reactivated or reinstated their credentials, after having done the same.<sup>60</sup> It is this phenomenon that bears special relevance for this study: if the retention rate of credential-holders reflected the same ratio as “new credentials vs death & dismissal”, the

<sup>59</sup> Source data provided by PAOC Clergy Records Department on June 23, 2022. See Appendix 2A for year over year data.

<sup>60</sup> The term “lapsed” here includes those who did not renew their clergy credentials by choice (as an alternative to formal resignation) or negligence (e.g.: missing fee deadline).

PAOC would have seen a net increase of 200 credential-holders from 2017-2022, (a growth rate of 5.3%) instead of the staggering net loss of 259 (decline of 7.5%).<sup>61</sup>

## **B. Qualitative Indications**

While additional analysis and modelling may provide further insight, the qualitative data collected in this study provides an account of prevalent experiences which are indicative of this rate of withdrawal, resignation, and non-renewal. Examining accounts of the circumstances of resignation (or its consideration) thus may serve as a type of autopsy for the observed decline.<sup>62</sup>

[They all knew I was being mistreated, but] nobody even cared to pick up the phone and say, "Hey, how are you?" So I ended up just leaving... I let my credentials pass. I said, "Forget it, I'm out.... I'm done with it."

And I got a phone call after there was a survey about credential-holders under 30, and the lack thereof. [Someone at the District] called me up and he says, "Hey, we noticed that your credentials have expired." I said, "You're just calling me now? Over a year after they lapsed? ...I don't even live [in your district] anymore. You have no idea where I am in the world, because [none of you] care."

... I never heard from anybody [in the district] ever again. That was it. That was the end of my relationship with the PAOC.

**- Wayne (Former PAOC Credential-holder; 8 Years of Service.)<sup>63</sup>**

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<sup>61</sup> The transfers of clergy in and out of the PAOC to associated denominational bodies in another countries bear less relevance within this analysis.

<sup>62</sup> Participants indicated that non-renewal was an effective form of soft resignation, perhaps because the active participation in the resignation process required further perceived contact with clergy in positions of power.

<sup>63</sup> Interview transcript.

It's really messed with my head... I love ministry, and I love the church, [but] I have a really, really hard time imagining myself continuing. I've been in situations, time and time again, where I'm not heard, and I'm not listened to, and [other PAOC clergy] use me. And now I'm just at a point where I ask, "What for?" ... I know that I could go elsewhere and be appreciated, and be compensated fairly, [and] be part of a better work culture. So why put myself in this situation over and over and over again?

**- Diane (Current PAOC Credential-holder. 10 Years of Service.)<sup>64</sup>**

Looking back, [I said to myself], "Yes, I have credentials... but what is it really doing for me?" [The PAOC] should have been like a union. They should have been the people that said, "Hey, how is this? How is this functioning? How are we going to help young pastors who get taken advantage right away?"

... It's not what I would have ever expected. And I think that's part of why I haven't gone back to ministry. In all honesty, it was both my internship church and my first job [in a PAOC church]. They were very similar, working for somebody who [belittled and took advantage of me.]

**- Cynthia (Former PAOC Credential-holder. 3 Years of Service.)<sup>65</sup>**

I grew up in a generation where you if just did what your superiors said, that would be the right thing to do. So, I did [that]... but I [was blacklisted anyway]. For years, I carried with me the guilt that it was my fault. And there was no one, no one to walk me through what I was feeling.

...I carried the scars of [being abused by that church] and [subsequently being marginalized by the District Superintendent] and I had no one who called me. No one to say, "Ross, how are you doing?" And wow. I know there were a lot of [pastors] in similar situations; people who would have left ministry and even their relationship with God altogether.

**- Ross (Current PAOC Credential-holder. 40 Years of Service.)<sup>66</sup>**

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<sup>64</sup> Interview transcript.

<sup>65</sup> Interview transcript.

<sup>66</sup> Interview transcript.

Each of these narratives emerges from a failure to create what Christopher Steed refers to as “Environments of Value”.<sup>67</sup> In a study on the impact of workplace dynamics on individuals, he observed that “participants in an organisation flourish when, under the right conditions, the inner value they live out in the workplace is converted to external, added value”.<sup>68</sup> Empirically speaking, these valuing environments create not only high levels of productivity, but also high levels of satisfaction among their participants, leading to retention.<sup>69</sup> Institutions that foster internal cultures of human dignity, mutual respect and fair compensation flourish; those that fail to do so, do not.<sup>70</sup> It is reasonable, therefore, to investigate whether organizations experiencing a declining retention of their workforce (such as the PAOC) are experiencing the predictable consequences of a non-valuing environment and not merely the tertiary effects of market trends beyond their control. Steed continues:

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<sup>67</sup> Steed, 82.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 46; Steed’s analysis of the impact such failures have on public image (and resultant deficits of trust and goodwill within their communities) is especially relevant within the broader sociological context of religion in the present era. As Matthew Guest points out, the impact of marketization of evangelical Christianity brings with it an expectation that church and denominational leaders will “take advantages of the processes of commodification common in commercial settings” such as branding, packaging, production, and marketing (Guest, 68, 61-70). Ironically, this methodology may have a cooling effect on the perceived urgency of the normative anthropological priorities embedded in the Christian faith; to whatever extent that “processes of commodification” might lead to the profitable and efficient mistreatment of employees, marketized religious institutions may thus expose themselves to even greater levels of scrutiny from their newfound markets, which, as Steed alludes, expect public accountability from corporate entities, especially the equitable treatment of human beings.

The question I set out to answer stemmed from intrigue. Why were client narratives, often of distress arising from experiences within organizations, generating statements about human value or its erosion? ... I began to listen out for client reports to do with 12 perceptions of feeling: belittled or put down, diminished, bullied, 'trashed', useless, disrespected, not noticed or disregarded, not heard, passed over, rejected, discriminated against, insulted.<sup>71</sup>

Steed's observations about his client's language in relation to their workplaces bear a remarkable resemblance to many of the descriptions provided by participants of this study as they described their experiences with other members of the clergy. Take for example the broader dynamics of Wayne's story; in particular, the multiple accounts of mistreatment that ultimately led to his resignation and credential non-renewal.

My contract had me working over 50 hours a week as a youth pastor, but I soon realized I was making a lower wage per-hour than the college students we hired to do small jobs around the church. That was the first time I felt exploited. And I couldn't just talk about wages openly, because if you do that you're seen as being ungrateful; like, the culture in the PAOC is that if you ever say you're wanting more money, you're crossing a line theologically. But exploited is the right word. I was working so much and I couldn't afford anything. And then the District Superintendent called to ask me to volunteer with some church-plants. He said, "We can't afford to pay you, but you're talented and we need your help." That's what it was like. Once I was actually told that I wasn't even the first choice for my job, but I was hired because I was "cheap."

Race is another thing. My district was very happy to use me if they needed a token [racial minority] pastor, but they didn't actually see me as valuable enough to invest in financially or relationally. That's the culture of the PAOC. For example, I ended up working at [a different church], and my first week on the job I found out I was hired solely for racial diversity on the otherwise white staff. In my first staff meeting, in front of everyone, the lead pastor blindsided me by asking, "So now we have a lot of [my race] in the community, but they don't come to our church. What do we do?" At yet another church where I worked, my lead pastor compared my appearance to that of a "terrorist" [due to my race]. And that's bad, but these problems go further than race.

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<sup>71</sup> Steed, 87.



It's also the unchecked abuse of power. I've had more than one lead pastor express that I (as a single adult) needed their permission about who I date. I had another demand I get his approval on where I was allowed to rent. I've been yelled at so badly that I was later given a raise in pay on the condition I don't ever tell anybody what he said. Another time a lead pastor heard I had been offered a job elsewhere, so he fired me on the spot. I think because he felt that even hearing about another job was disloyal. I then had no choice but to take that job, even though it was at a church I wasn't totally sure I wanted to work at.

This has all broken me. It's messed me up. And that's why I left the PAOC. All this talk about "we're a family." No, we're not. The district knew how each of these pastors were behaving, [those pastors] had a track record of doing this to others, but [the district] never warned me about it and they never got involved. So I left.<sup>72</sup>

### C. A Systemic Problem

Wayne's story is unfortunately not unique in the sample; in fact, most participants reported enduring overlapping experiences of mistreatment. While the settings of participant narratives span all eight PAOC districts (and in most cases, participants would not even know one another),<sup>73</sup> many cite the same person or persons as perpetrators of abuses of power in alarmingly similar ways. The collective narratives of the sample group produced a list of fifty-three different credential-holders in positions of power or authority who engaged in unethical, and personally damaging, treatment of subordinates. Ten of the twenty-five participants independently and specifically named an unofficial "PAOC Old Boys Club" in allegations of abuse of power,<sup>74</sup> with others alluding to the same. Regarding individuals, Figure 2.2 illustrates the

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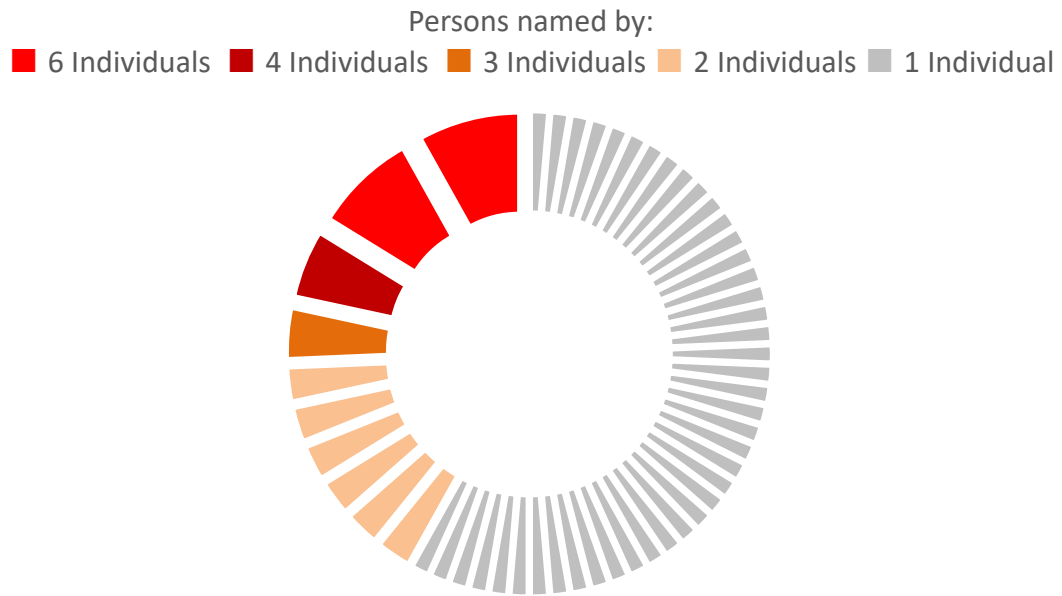
<sup>72</sup> Summary of Wayne's story; edited for length and for confidentiality.

<sup>73</sup> Due to geographic distance, demographic variance, and non-overlapping chronology, most participants would likely be entirely unaware of each other's experiences.

<sup>74</sup> The "PAOC Old Boys Club" is characterized as a loose and informal camaraderie of "insider" white male credential-holders who share an absolute loyalty to "old school" PAOC values. This group is suggested to have an inappropriate amount of hidden influence on the hiring and promotion of other clergy, in addition to being able to secure preferential treatment at will (including the dismissal of complaints) by sidestepping formal processes and appealing to insider connections.

number of different research participants who named the same person in a complaint during their interview.

**FIGURE 2.2:**  
**Different Complaints Named per Person<sup>75</sup>**



Considering the distance of time and space over which these narratives take place, and the broad consistency of their content, the overlapping data indicates that abuse of power has been persistent for some time, with named perpetrators comfortable in both their roles and behaviour. Regardless of official statements, sentiments expressed at conferences, or encouraging words within monthly newsletters, the participant accounts of unaddressed mistreatment by other members of the clergy are a sobering measure of a significant problem.

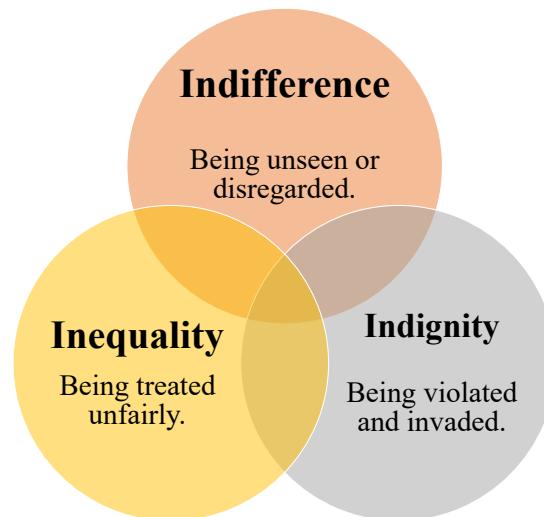
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<sup>75</sup> A further eleven (11) individuals were named as passive enablers in the face of clear abuses of power.

## D. Dominant Themes for Categorizing Experiences

As mentioned, each of the coded experience within this study fit squarely within one of the three categories: indifference, inequality, and indignity.<sup>76</sup> These three categories can be best understood not as three independent classifications, but rather as three related (and sometimes overlapping) experiences.

**FIGURE 2.3:**  
**Overlap of Themes**



While each of the coded experiences have been associated to one primary category (e.g.: favouritism is most obviously an issue of inequality), participants ascribed the most severe and negative impacts of their experiences to events that fell within a combination of multiple categories (e.g.: suffering under inequality, but having their complaint met with indifference, followed by an experience of indignity via direct retaliation,

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<sup>76</sup> Steed, 87.

from the original party, after filing a complaint).<sup>77</sup> What follows is an exploration of each category and the coded experiences associated to it.

### 3. Indifference

For indifference to thrive, a workplace (or, in this case, the ecclesial structure of the PAOC) merely requires a system where those in a position of power are not held accountable for a failure to see those they lead as valuable humans.<sup>78</sup> Through the act of seeing and hearing those around them,<sup>79</sup> healthy leaders demonstrate that those they lead are valuable; in contrast, when leaders fail to do this, the effect on an individual is that they come to believe they are “undervalued, or of little worth,” within the organization.<sup>80</sup> Thus even when indifference is practised unintentionally, its impact remains significant.<sup>81</sup>

In contrast, intentional forms of indifference are exhibited in callous or premeditated acts such as decisions to intentionally marginalize someone, or to patronize someone by giving the illusion of listening to them while harbouring prejudicial determinations. The calculated silencing of a person, through exclusion or interruption, is especially devastating, as “to be human

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<sup>77</sup> Notwithstanding the multiplied impact of overlapping categories, it must be noted that each of these experiences is dehumanizing in some form, and likely constitutes an abuse of power.

<sup>78</sup> Steed, 88.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 86-88; Steed argues that listening must be done well for it to be effective. A leaders “listening” is not effective if the member they are listening to does not feel heard. Note that this does not require leaders to begin the uncontested implementation of all suggestions from those in subordinate roles; listening to a subordinate is not synonymous with agreeing or deferring to them. Nonetheless, authentic listening does require effectively seeing those one supervises as valuable and worth hearing. Practically, this may require an adjustment to one’s weekly schedule, or the development of new systems, in order to effectively create room for this responsibility.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 88; For example, when an inexperienced director renders certain pastors in their area invisible (perhaps they aren’t self-aware enough to realize that they only “notice” workers who are outgoing and tall), or when the district executive (DE) fails to hold accountable a superintendent who repeatedly looks past the needs of those around them (some leaders are so focused on mission that they fail to see the human impact of their decisions). These deficiencies, though passive, have a significant impact on subordinate clergy.

<sup>81</sup> A sense that indifference is often unintentional was captured in the ambivalent sentiments of participants who described the pain of an unjust experience while also releasing key authority figures from blame. Several participants described knowing that certain denominational leaders “meant well”, despite simultaneously airing frustration over their refusal to act or intervene in a dire situation.

is to have a voice”.<sup>82</sup> In all cases, indifference is dehumanizing and therefore has negative consequences for the organizations in which it occurs, both visibly (indifference negatively effects employee productivity and retention),<sup>83</sup> and invisibly (indifference erodes the spiritual integrity of the organization).

It is the latter that Christian institutions must become especially concerned with. Those that proclaim human beings as divine image bearers,<sup>84</sup> “cracked eikons, but eikons nonetheless”,<sup>85</sup> and those who are “bought at a price”,<sup>86</sup> must recognize that these statements demand the practice of an integral Christian ethic that demonstrates human value regardless of a person’s power or status.

### **A. Ranking Common Experiences of Indifference**

The following table provides a ranked list of coded experiences of indifference. The list is divided into two columns: local church experiences,<sup>87</sup> and systemic experiences.<sup>88</sup> In both cases, the referenced events have taken place specifically in the context of a power differential, with the empowered member of the clergy identified as directly responsible for the coded experience.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Langberg, 7.

<sup>83</sup> Steed, 88.

<sup>84</sup> SOET, 2: “Creation”.

<sup>85</sup> McKnight, 75.

<sup>86</sup> 1 Cor 6:20.

<sup>87</sup> Local church experiences list codes associated with a local church ministry, in which a subordinate clergy member has suffered the indicated experience with a supervising member of the clergy (e.g.: a youth pastor and a lead pastor).

<sup>88</sup> Systemic experiences are occurrences that took place outside of the local church, which can include pastors in any role interacting with a district or national leader, a member of their DE or DLT, or another person of influence from outside of a congregational context.

<sup>89</sup> The term “leader” is regularly used as a shorthand to denote the empowered member of the clergy.

**TABLE 2.1:**  
**Common Experiences of Indifference**

<b>EXPERIENCES OF INDIFFERENCE (CODES AND PREVALENCE)</b>			
<b>Local Church Experiences</b>		<b>PAOC / Systemic Experiences</b>	
Experiences of indifference that occurred specifically within a local church context (e.g.: church staff interactions).		Experiences of indifference that occurred beyond the local church context (e.g.: district and national interactions).	
<b>CODE</b>	<b>RANK</b>	<b>CODE</b>	<b>RANK</b>
<b>Conflict of Interest</b> <i>The experience of being dismissed or disregarded due to a leader's conflict of interest (e.g. personal friendship) and associated prejudice.</i>	1	<b>Passivity</b> <i>The experience of reporting a serious issue to a person in authority who determines not to act or intervene despite their capacity to do so.</i>	1
<b>Gaslighting</b> <i>The experience of being dismissed or disregarded due to a leader's repetitive denial and insistent reframing of the other person's experience.</i>	2	<b>Conflict of Interest</b> <i>The experience of being dismissed or disregarded due to a leader's conflict of interest (e.g. personal friendship) and associated prejudice.</i>	2
<b>Conflict Avoidance</b> <i>The experience of being dismissed or disregarded due to a leader's preference to avoid conflict.</i>	3	<b>Marginalization</b> <i>The experience of being intentionally isolated, pre-emptively dismissed or disregarded for opportunities as an informal sanction.</i>	3
<b>Tokenism</b> <i>The experience of being disregarded, despite one's status or position, due to the disingenuousness of the appointment (e.g. being placed on a lead team as a token woman, and never being taken seriously).</i>	4	<b>Cover-Up Scheme</b> <i>The experience of having the truth of an incident intentionally obfuscated by a person in authority (this may also result in the diminishing of one's personal credibility).</i>	4
		<b>Lack of Clergy Support</b> <i>Experiencing the inavailability of support resources in the aftermath of a serious issue (e.g.: inability to access counselling benefits).</i>	5
		<b>Unaddressed Patterns</b> <i>The experience of harm from a leader who is known by district or national leaders to have engaged in such acts before (but has not been addressed).</i>	6
		<b>Authoritarianism</b> <i>The experience of being, or having one's needs, pre-eminently dismissed and disregarded by a leader who is grossly misusing their position.</i>	7

		<b>Protectionism</b> <i>The experience of being dismissed or disregarded due to the priority of image management or self-protection (e.g.: the risk of legal liability upon acknowledgment).</i>	8
		<b>Tokenism</b> <i>The experience of being disregarded, despite one's status or position, due to the disingenuousness of the appointment (e.g. being placed on a lead team as a token woman, and never being taken seriously).</i>	9
		<b>NDA</b> s <i>The experience of being silenced from communicating about a significant matter through a legally binding agreement (sometimes in exchange for severance).<sup>90</sup></i>	10
		<b>Withholding Information</b> <i>The experience of being disregarded and disadvantaged through the deliberate withholding or concealment of relevant information to which one is entitled (e.g.: a lack of transparency regarding information attained in an exclusive meeting, to which the effected party cannot thus respond).</i>	11
		<b>Abandonment</b> <i>The experience of being relationally cut off by members of the organization, despite retaining clergy credentials.</i>	12
		<b>Gaslighting</b> <i>The experience of being dismissed or disregarded due to a leader's repetitive denial and insistent reframing of the other person's experience.</i>	13

Due to the volume of codes, the subsequent discussion will focus on the most prevalent experiences and their implications.

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<sup>90</sup> In this context, NDAs are only tracked if they were used to limit a person's ability to share an experience of power abuse. While the use of NDAs in Canada have long been contested in certain circumstances, the 2023 decision by the Canadian Bar Association to prohibit the use of NDAs as a tool to hide abuse, harassment and discrimination will have significant future impact on this practice. See Bhat and Schmunk, "Lawyers Across Canada".

## B. Systemic Passivity in the PAOC

Of particular note in this sample is the domination of the code “passivity”. Twenty-two of the participants made a collective seventy-two references to experiences of passivity (often in multiple contexts) that impacted them in a significantly negative way. For example, when John became acutely aware of ethical breaches perpetuated by multiple district officers, including his district superintendent, he approached a member of the DE,<sup>91</sup> which functions as the official board of directors for the regional PAOC district, according to its by-laws.

I reached out to [executive team member], and they didn't want to hear anything about it. They, they were like, “Nope, that's not my responsibility. I don't want to hear about it. Our purview is vision and budget.” That raised red flags to me, like, yes, I get vision and budget, but where is the accountability? Some of the things that I had assumed for a long time were in place were not. We entrust the DE we have elected to provide accountability in these situations, but they don't.<sup>92</sup>

Dave, a youth pastor, had been enduring increasingly demeaning comments for months from his lead pastor, even being threatened with termination due to dislike of his preaching style. Suddenly (and inconsiderately) saddled with additional duties, his pastor admitted this was a calculated decision made for the purpose of “testing” him. Appalled, he addressed his supervisor directly, a confrontation that led to a season of aggressive gaslighting. Manipulated by insecurities that developed from his pastor's frequent lies about what congregants and board members were saying behind his back, he grew more and more depressed. Upon discovering that the disparaging comments were entirely fabricated, Dave confided the totality of the situation to the District Superintendent, providing details and evidence of the misconduct (including the names of board members who had

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<sup>91</sup> Notwithstanding that some districts have an equivalent body referred to as the district leadership team (DLT), DE is used to in this study to refer to the body of elected credential-holders that form the official governing board within a district, as specified in their constitution and by-laws.

<sup>92</sup> Condensed from interview transcript.



been pulled into the conflict). After taking in the account, the District Superintendent's instructions were that he needed to "be a David to your Saul".<sup>93</sup> Despite being educated in a PAOC college, attending ordination training through his district, and engaging his superintendent, Dave was never informed that he could have filed a complaint against the lead pastor for his actions, which were a clear violation of ministerial ethics.<sup>94</sup> Reflecting broadly on this experience, he noted:

In all of these situations, there have been no repercussions for lead pastors or district leaders. I even reached out afterward to the General Superintendent and shared my story with him. I said "Something needs to change. And I'd love to be a part of that conversation." His response was very carefully passive. I realized that I wasn't going to get anywhere because I don't have a position of authority that needs to be paid attention to.<sup>95</sup>

While one can hardly fault a district or general officer for proceeding cautiously in the face of a complaint for which they have little context, it is clear that passivity (as a practice of indifference) is not limited to shrouded complaints with circumstantial evidence.

As a young youth pastor, Gary was let go by his church suddenly and without cause, following the resignation of the lead pastor.<sup>96</sup> Gary was instructed to continue in his job for a period of time, informed that this arrangement was his notice in lieu of severance, but was forbidden from telling anyone that he had been let go (despite receiving written notice). Several clear breaches of law followed. Prior to his conclusion, the church

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<sup>93</sup> This specific phrase is commonly used as a shorthand reference to Gene Edwards book, *A Tale of Three Kings*. Edwards' work is deeply embedded in the cultural framework of the PAOC in regard to power, submission, and abuse, and is frequently alluded to within the sample. This quote is an allusion to the theme of the book, which argues that a truly godly leader must never strike back at one in a position of spiritual authority, no matter how abusive their behaviour may be. In this case, the superintendent is suggesting that the path forward for this young pastor is to serve his leader faithfully, dodging, but not resisting, any perceived attacks. This particular book, its message, and its influence are explored directly in chapter four.

<sup>94</sup> PAOC, "Ministerial Code of Ethics".

<sup>95</sup> Paraphrased from Interview transcript.

<sup>96</sup> According to the statutes in the province of his employment, termination without cause is allowed as long as notice or severance are provided.

garnished his wages for costs associated with Gary's move to the church (years before), claiming these funds were "repayable loans" (a designation made without his knowledge nor his presence in a board meeting after his start date). At a time of the board's choosing, Gary was required to read a letter of resignation, despite the fact that he had not resigned. Following his termination, the Record of Employment (ROE) filed with the federal government was falsified to support the narrative, listing "Code E: Quit" as the reason for Gary's unemployment, instead of "Code M: Dismissal", making him ineligible for employment insurance benefits. When he approached the Assistant Superintendent (who was overseeing the church transition) about these legal and ethical breaches, he was discouraged from taking action.<sup>97</sup>

[He told me], "You're a hotheaded young guy, you're getting burnt really bad. You could turn around and burn the church down [but] if you do that, you'll never work in a PAOC church again."

The idea was [I'm supposed to] just grin and bear it, and God will reward [me] later... Looking back? It's [all about] protecting the church at all costs. And I get that side of it, except when the leadership of the church is toxic, and there's no accountability there! Like if you truly want to protect the church, then remove the toxic leadership, right?...

[They say] "Churches are autonomous, and they can do what they want. We're a fellowship, we're not a denomination." Isn't that just skirting responsibility?... So we have to let them be autonomous? They're abusive! It's not autonomy, it's abuse!<sup>98</sup>

Gary makes a formidable argument that underlines the issue of passivity within the sample frame. Yet this passivity is selective. While the sentiment

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<sup>97</sup> It is important to note the obvious conflict of interest in this situation; the district, via the Assistant Superintendent, is charged with supporting and guiding a PAOC affiliated church through a process of lead pastor transition. However in this case, the Assistant Superintendent's responsibility to the church conflicts with his responsibility to the credential-holder, who is alleging mistreatment. The use of positional influence to discourage the credential-holder from taking legal action (which, arguably, would reflect terribly on the district leader overseeing the transition), should be classified as an abuse of power due to this conflict of interest.

<sup>98</sup> Interview transcript.

that the district “cannot intervene” is often evoked in conversations with non-lead pastors, those serving in lead roles experience a different reality. Albert, a lead pastor with seventeen years’ experience, explains it this way:

The district claims that local churches are autonomous but also manipulates them by dictating a “standard process” and the board really doesn’t know any better. Yes, the church is technically autonomous, and it has the right to lead according to what they think is best in this situation, but the power dynamic between the District Superintendent and the church board mean they are very easily manipulated.<sup>99</sup>

Another lead pastor, recounting a conflict with the District Superintendent after their local church board made a decision, noted:

When I pushed back on the District Superintendent’s objections, and said “this isn’t the district’s role, we are a fellowship of autonomous churches,” he tried to intimidate me. I think he said something like, “Well it is in **your** best interest to follow the advice of your superintendent.”<sup>100</sup>

These stories, and those like them, are associated with multiple codes in Table 2.1 that highlight the dark side of institutional indifference, not least of which include the obvious concerns demonstrated in these examples: conflict of interest, cover-up schemes,<sup>101</sup> and protectionism.<sup>102</sup> While failures to effectively respond to requests for help may constitute a passive form of indifference, they are nonetheless damaging.

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<sup>99</sup> Interview transcript.

<sup>100</sup> Condensed from interview transcript S1P9. Emphasis added to reflect tone.

<sup>101</sup> Ultimately, Gary’s congregation was never told the truth about his departure; the accounts related by both lead pastors in this section involve significant attempts to “control the narrative” of events, both through pressures to sign an NDA for settlement and in significant withholding of information.

<sup>102</sup> There is a pattern of prioritizing the preservation of the church’s image; it often necessitates ignoring a cry for help from a member of the clergy. As will be explored in chapter four, this is an example of sacralizing the image of an institution, perhaps falsely equating it with God’s own reputation, and in the process profaning that which is made in His own image (human beings).

### C. Marginalization and Victim-Blaming

Ultimately, Gary chose to resign his credentials in good standing. In part, this decision stemmed from a conviction that he simply could no longer go along with admonishments imposed by district leaders which he perceived to be increasingly out of touch and protectionistic. Yet he describes his experience after resignation as even more painful.

Even though I resigned with my credentials in “good standing,” I’ve been iced out. Even from volunteering. I’m not even allowed to help at a summer camp! It’s very clear that I’ve been blacklisted, and there is no communication. When I made a call to find out why I couldn’t serve as a volunteer, I discovered that [the district leadership] had all been talking about me behind my back. “We decided you might want some time away from doing ministry,” is what they said.

I was told all of the conversations [leading up to my choice to resign] were confidential. So why is this happening? Now nobody will call me. Nobody will be my friend. It’s clear that [all of those years] of service don’t matter.<sup>103</sup>

This kind of marginalization is another expression of indifference and features prominently within the research sample; in many cases the fear of marginalization is as impactful as the act itself. Throughout the study, participants described being marginalized as an informal consequence to the expression of dissent: refusing to “take” abuse, refusing to keep quiet about concerns, or refusing to uphold unofficial expectations. In each case, marginalization was experienced by powerless clergy in circumstances where there were no grounds for discipline or official sanction according to the by-laws.

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<sup>103</sup> Condensed from interview transcript.

I had publicly asked for help [while pastoring a very difficult church], so now I was on the list of “complaining pastors” and I couldn’t get another job. Well, I tried to apply. I couldn’t get interviews. In those days only the superintendent had the names of open churches, and what the District Superintendent thinks of you is what determines if you get your resume put in places. So, I got in more trouble for sending my resumes out directly. He felt that I went behind his back.

So I was “frozen out”, and isolated from my community. I was “blacklisted”. I never had another pastoral opportunity until one of my childhood friends was elected as the new District Superintendent. I’ve served faithfully for more than twenty-years since. What does that tell you?<sup>104</sup>

During the initial screening of participants for this study, the researcher encountered significant feedback, from the broader PAOC clergy base, that allegations of abuse of power within the PAOC are “baseless” because the recipients of abusive behaviour are themselves far from innocent.<sup>105</sup> Essentially, these advocates alleged that those who have been mistreated “deserve” what has been done to them. (This victim-blaming persists despite the availability of established procedures and by-laws that can be used to discipline credential-holders who have indeed breached ethical or moral standards.) Within this sample, thirteen participants reported twenty-three distinct instances of marginalization; for eleven of those participants, no grounds for discipline existed in any form whatsoever, and nor were they ever the subject of disciplinary inquiry. For the other two participants, the threat of a disciplinary action was used against them, but it was introduced in a manner entirely outside of the official procedures established in the PAOC by-laws as a way to coerce compliance through fear; in these cases, marginalization also followed.

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<sup>104</sup> Interview transcript S1P7. Edited for confidentiality.

<sup>105</sup> Private source.

## D. NDAs and Cover Up Schemes

Cover-up schemes (which can include NDAs), demonstrate another dimension of indifference in their active attempt to silence the weaker party. Mila was the target of serious misconduct by a district leader; after collecting evidence and presenting the same to the DE, she was offered a financial settlement in exchange for an NDA.<sup>106</sup> The DE made no mention of any counter-investigation, nor the manner in which she brought evidence of the misconduct. Nonetheless, Mila, not the leader in question, became the villain (both privately and publicly) in the aftermath. Her District Superintendent's particular concern was in that in coming forward about her experience, she had "...made us look bad. You made the [PAOC] look bad".<sup>107</sup> An insider to this event was also interviewed as part of this study, and they reported being severed from their role without warning or cause approximately six months after this event, but shortly after voicing their dissent over Mila's treatment. Notably, their severance package (and future employment references) required the signing of an NDA that excluded them from sharing their knowledge of what had happened to Mila.

Winston, a lead pastor with over twenty-five years of service in the PAOC, describes a similar dynamic in his district; he raised a request for a copy of a report frequently cited in a significant policy decision being led by the District Superintendent, noting that this report had never been published or released to the constituency. When his initial request for the report was ignored, he continued to press the issue. Despite the requirement that the DE respond to all official correspondence, his written requests went ignored for over a year, without even an acknowledgement of receipt. When a DE member finally spoke with Winston, on condition of confidentiality, he revealed the DE had been instructed to "keep [their] mouth shut",<sup>108</sup> as there had indeed been a breach of internal protocol, which the request for the

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<sup>106</sup> The evidence included witness statements, email documentation, and audio recordings that demonstrated bullying, threats, manipulation and lying (among other things).

<sup>107</sup> Interview transcript.

<sup>108</sup> Interview transcript.

report had brought to light. Despite this, Winston was both publicly and privately reprimanded for being divisive in his ongoing request for information. He reflects, “Nobody’s answering and they don’t like [that I am] asking the question. I thought we were a transparent organization... but information is power, right?”<sup>109</sup>

Hearing concerns and grievances, and responding appropriately, is essential in the creation of a valuing environment. Both Winston and Mila’s experiences are examples of something quite opposite: a willful indifference bolstered by authoritarian tactics to marginalize a complainant. These are deliberate means of devaluing clergy within the PAOC. As one of the consistent themes emerging in the data is the attempt, by those in power, to control public narratives (rather than hearing, acknowledging, and responding in good faith to issues raised), this issue is indicative of a systemic problem that requires further study. It is telling that at the time of writing, there are no known instances of public institutional apology to clergy for these, or any other known, instances of abuse of power.

#### **4. Inequality**

Steed defined “inequality” as a dishonouring of a person’s humanity which includes unfair (or inequitable) treatment and systemic disrespect (for example, failing to honour and acknowledge a person’s expertise professionally), in addition to acts of sexism, racism, generally berating comments, and other diminishing acts perpetrated by a supervisor.<sup>110</sup> These behaviours, whether intentional or not, result in members of the organization feeling like they are “not worth very much”,<sup>111</sup> especially in comparison to others who don’t suffer these experiences.

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Steed, 88.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

## A. Ranking Common Experiences of Inequality

The following table provides a ranked list of coded experiences of inequality, common across the sample, following the same conventions as Table 2.1.

**TABLE 2.2:**  
**Common Experiences of Inequality**

<b>EXPERIENCES OF INEQUALITY (CODES AND PREVALENCE)</b>			
<b>Local Church Experiences</b>		<b>PAOC / Systemic Experiences</b>	
Experiences of indifference that occurred specifically within a local church context (e.g.: church staff interactions).		Experiences of indifference that occurred beyond the local church context (e.g.: district and national interactions).	
<b>CODE</b>	<b>RANK</b>	<b>CODE</b>	<b>RANK</b>
<b>Labour Complaints</b> <i>The experience of inequitable workplace conditions, including violations of legal employment standards and employer breaches of the employment contract.</i>	1	<b>Sexism</b> <i>The experience of inequitable treatment solely on the basis of sex. This includes limitations for opportunity and advancement as well as reduced pay for the same work.</i>	1
<b>Favouritism</b> <i>The experience of inequality due to the non-meritorious favouring of a person with whom the director has a personal relationship with; includes nepotism.</i>	2	<b>Favouritism</b> <i>The experience of inequality due to the non-meritorious favouring of a person with whom the director has a personal relationship with; includes nepotism.</i>	2
<b>Exploitation</b> <i>The experience of being systematically taken advantage of, whether on the basis of ignorance or via direct means such as coercion and manipulation.</i>	3	<b>Role-Based Discrimination</b> <i>The experience of inequitable treatment solely on the basis of role. For example, treating credential-holders of equal tenure and education discriminately based on their respective roles of lead pastor vs. non-lead pastor.</i>	3
<b>Berating Comments</b> <i>The experience of being targeted or singled out from the group and diminished instead of corrected. Also includes public and private belittling via inappropriate comparison to others.</i>	4	<b>Labour Complaints</b> <i>The experience of inequitable workplace conditions, including violations of legal employment standards and employer breaches of the employment contract.</i>	4



<b>Sexism</b> <i>The experience of inequitable treatment solely on the basis of sex. This includes limitations for opportunity and advancement as well as reduced pay for the same work.</i>	5	<b>Exploitation</b> <i>The experience of being targeted or singled out from the group and diminished instead of corrected. Also includes public and private belittling via inappropriate comparison to others.</i>	5
<b>Racism</b> <i>The experience of inequitable treatment solely on the basis of race. This includes limitations for opportunity and advancement as well as reduced pay for the same work.</i>	6	<b>Berating Comments</b> <i>The experience of being subjected to comments by an employer that are not intended to discipline or correct, but only to diminish and belittle.</i>	6
		<b>Racism</b> <i>The experience of inequitable treatment solely on the basis of race. This includes limitations for opportunity and advancement as well as reduced pay for the same work.</i>	7

Of particular note in this category are the sheer volume of labour complaints; no less than nineteen participants cited this as a significant experience within their local church context. These complaints speak to the very heart of Steed’s definition of inequality: participants described excessive workloads, unpaid hours, toxic working conditions, breaches of their employment contract, and being manipulated by their supervisors to accept unwelcome changes to their working agreements. Some examples include:

### 1. Excessive Hours, No Overtime Pay

At his last church, Wayne was required to be present in the office from 9am - 5pm, Monday to Friday, and participate in services on Sundays, in addition to leading midweek programs three evenings per week. He averaged 64 hours of work per week. His employer also required him to continue his theological education “in his free time” (a condition of employment). In the province where Wayne was employed, he must agree in writing to work beyond 48 hours, and be provided overtime pay.<sup>112</sup> This is an employer responsibility, and these rights cannot be

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<sup>112</sup> The legislation that requires written agreements for work beyond 48 hours is to enforce an employee’s legal right to refuse all scheduling beyond a 48 hour work week.

waived.<sup>113</sup> Further, Wayne cannot be penalized or chastised for asking questions about the employment standards in his province, however when bringing up his hours and workload, he was chastised to be “grateful” for a pastoral job. He commented, “The church was working me to death, but then criticizing me for being fatigued”.<sup>114</sup> As noted, Wayne chose not to renew his credentials, and no longer pastors in the PAOC.<sup>115</sup>

## 2. Excessive Workload

When another pastor on staff was terminated, Greg was asked to temporarily assume additional responsibilities while maintaining his regular workload. There was no increase in pay or other compensation. When the church hired a new pastor, they built a new portfolio for this individual and never relieved Greg of his “temporary” responsibilities. After months had passed, he approached his lead pastor and spoke

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<sup>113</sup> While each province has its own rules for overtime pay, this particular scenario runs afoul of labour laws in all provincial jurisdictions (see Mehta, “Overtime Rules in Canada”).

While church-based employers in some provinces, such as Ontario, have claimed that because religious leaders are an excluded class in the Employment Standards Act (ESA), scenarios (for example, any of the scenarios given as examples within this section) still fall within the law, regardless of how unfair they may seem. However, upon consultation with an agent from the Ontario Ministry of Labour, the researcher was able to determine that only sacred duties (such as administering church ordinances) are exempt from overtime pay. In Ontario, all “regular” work by clergy, such as administration, program preparation and execution, is subject to the full provisions of the ESA, including overtime pay after 44 hours of work (there is an exception made for managerial work, which is defined as exclusively overseeing other employees; thus a lead pastor may not be covered by this statute, although their subordinates most certainly would). The right of Ontario clergy to overtime pay is further established if clergy do not set their own working hours (e.g.: required by a supervisor to maintain office hours during the week). This very issue was decided in court in *Kashruth Council of Canada v Rand* (2011) when the Ontario Labour Relations Board ruled in favour of two Jewish mashgichim, noting that, while their work was religious in nature, due to their status as supervised employees (who did not set their own schedule) the Employment Standards Act (including right to overtime pay) applied to them in full.

As noted by John Pellowe, CEO of the Canadian Centre for Christian Charities, in general, despite the legal requirement to meet these standards, Christian employers (including churches) have “counted on the pastor not going to the courts to sue fellow believers” when these rights are violated, rather than simply abiding by the established codes (Pellowe, “How Christian is My Ministry?”).

<sup>114</sup> Interview transcript.

<sup>115</sup> Summarized from field notes.

candidly: “I am being crushed. I’m drowning, I need help”.<sup>116</sup> He explained the negative impact of the workload on his health and to his family. His lead pastor responded by saying, “This is how we stretch you as a leader.”<sup>117</sup> He felt his only options were to continue to work in excess of seventy hours per week or resign and look for a new job. Greg resigned from his role, subsequently resigned his credentials, and no longer pastors in the PAOC.<sup>118</sup>

### **3. Unpaid Hours and Intimidation**

When Cynthia was interviewed, she was told her part-time pastoral role would be compensated at 19 hours per week. “Some weeks you’ll work a bit more, but others you’ll work less. It balances out.” Cynthia noted that over two years, there were many weeks she worked more, but never a single week she worked less. When this extra work was required for weeks on end, she would inform the lead pastor that she had used all of her paid hours, but he nonetheless insisted that she was required to attend special meetings and events. When another pastor resigned, she was informed (not asked) that her responsibilities would now include covering that job, despite no increase in her paid hours. Cynthia was now expected to be available 5 days per week, in addition to Sundays. Her escalating requests for consideration (full-time pay for full-time hours, or a reduction in expectations) were eventually met with intimidation and threats regarding her reputation and ultimately her future within the denomination (her pastor claimed to be well connected and influential). Cynthia ultimately resigned both her role and her credentials, and no longer pastors in the PAOC.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Interview transcript.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Summarized from field notes.

<sup>119</sup> Summarized from field notes.

#### **4. Contract Breach and Forced Volunteerism**

Maggie objected three times (including once in writing) to taking on the additional responsibilities formerly fulfilled by a part-time employee who had resigned; she repeatedly expressed that she could not manage these responsibilities in addition to her already full-time pastoral role. Her objections were not only ignored, but her job description was amended without her consent. Maggie was upset but unaware that this is a violation of labour law. Feeling crushed by the workload, Maggie's breaking point came when the church also required her to "volunteer" for an extra 5-10 hours of ministry per week and attend various off-hour prayer meetings, even if they fell on her day off. Exhausted to the point of illness, she ultimately resigned her job upon the advice of her physician; she also chose not to renew her credentials due to the lack of support that she experienced from her district office over a one-year period leading up to her burnout. Maggie no longer pastors in the PAOC.<sup>120</sup>

#### **5. Pay Withheld, Time-Off Denied**

Excited for the opportunity, Joseph departed from Bible College before graduating from his program following a successful interview for a pastoral position at a church in another province. He then made a significant relocation. Certain he could complete his studies at a distance, Joseph looked forward to gaining pastoral experience while studying. Upon arrival, the lead pastor suggested that Joseph had misunderstood their arrangement: the parsonage he was promised was merely a bedroom in someone else's home, and his pay was set at a mere \$150 per week until he "proved himself faithful." He put his education on hold and tried to win the approval of the lead pastor by putting in full-time hours. After three months, rather than a raise in pay, he was chided for only working 50 hours per week, and told to do better. After two years without vacation, and unable to make payments

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<sup>120</sup> Summarized from field notes.

on his student loans (due to his meager income), Joseph reached a breaking point. He requested time off to visit his parents in the light of serious physical symptoms of ill health. When his request was denied, Joseph resigned and was subsequently accused of failing to “submit to those placed in authority over you.”<sup>121</sup> The long-term impact to Joseph’s physical health from this season of ministry lingers to this day.<sup>122</sup>

## **B. The Impact of Workplace Exploitation**

In trying to explain how egregious abuses of employment standards have impacted her life, Emily shared this perspective:

We couldn’t go to our leaders and set boundaries, because the whole workplace culture at the church was that we are all here to “put ministry first.” My pastor said that ministry was supposed to be our whole lives. I was working 82 hours a week, and they just pointed out that my contract had never listed a specific “number of hours.” We were just expected to get the job done, no matter what. I had very little time off, and on days that I was “off” there was the expectation of constant communication by email or text. It affected me mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. The reason I stayed is because I was young and naive. My pastor told me that my “success” [in this church] would set me up for life, and that no other pastor would give me these same opportunities.<sup>123</sup>

Excessive hours and unrealistic job-descriptions have a direct impact on a person’s wellbeing; they also play a significant role in the cycle of powerlessness. Both are reasons that legal standards exist to protect employees. Cheryl Forbes notes, “we could rephrase ‘barefoot, hungry, and pregnant’ to read ‘keep them poorly paid, eager and over-worked’”,<sup>124</sup> a

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<sup>121</sup> Interview transcript.

<sup>122</sup> Summarized from field notes.

<sup>123</sup> Condensed from Interview transcript.

<sup>124</sup> Forbes, 72; While speaking specifically to the issue of sexism, Forbes nonetheless clearly identifies the role that economic exploitation plays in keeping a demographic of people locked into a cycle of powerlessness.

sentiment that echoes the reality participants frequently cited: exhausted and financially desperate, they were simply unable to stand up to an aggressive and difficult supervisor. Participants also expressed that their generosity and willingness to go the extra mile was frequently abused and manipulated. Labour complaints from former employees at PAOC district offices are similar: excessive unpaid hours, lack of lieu time following busy seasons, and on occasion, the requirement to use personal funds and vacation time to attend required functions.

Other reports of inappropriate working conditions include incidents such as being directed to disregard safeguarding policies (specifically the Plan to Protect<sup>®</sup> protocols required by the PAOC),<sup>125</sup> being mandated to preach on short notice as a “test”,<sup>126</sup> and even an instance of a co-worker wiping bodily fluids onto their colleague “as a joke,” which subsequently went unaddressed. Each of these incidents represents an assault on human dignity that resulted in a sense of being “lesser.”

### C. Sexism in the PAOC

Inequality is perhaps most visible in the frequent accounts of systemic sexism that emerged in the research.<sup>127</sup> A pattern of discrimination against female pastors, specifically in regard to the accessibility of mentors, support, and opportunity is noted. As recently as 2018, Cynthia sought to meet with a district leader to discuss the poor working conditions she was experiencing,<sup>128</sup> but was instead relegated to meet with an office administrator. She explained why this happened:

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<sup>125</sup> This direction, given by a lead pastor, was in direct contradiction to specific college training the youth pastor had received on the subject. The youth pastor was subsequently belittled by his supervisor (who claimed to be a true “expert” on safeguarding), and threatened with termination if he did not yield to the direction.

<sup>126</sup> This member of the clergy was called at home on a Saturday night and given less than 12-hours to prepare for the next day’s service. The supervisor later disclosed this was part of a calculated strategy to “test” their abilities.

<sup>127</sup> Sexism is ranked as the number one systemic issue.

<sup>128</sup> Cynthia’s complaint included serious allegations of unpaid hours and willful intimidation.

It's because I am a female, and that [district leader] doesn't meet with females. It was a boy's club. I don't think I [ever] talked to [my district leader] one-on-one the entire time [I was in that district], and I don't know if what I shared was ever passed on, because nothing was ever done to help me.<sup>129</sup>

Samantha, a pastor with more than two decades of experience, shared that she continues to experience discrimination, even after the *Statement of Affirmation Regarding the Equality of Men and Women in Leadership* was released in 2018:<sup>130</sup> "I spoke at an event, one that many people I know have spoken at before. But for some reason when I spoke, the district leaders wouldn't eat a meal with me. Hospitality was off-limits, because I'm a woman, and they are all men."<sup>131</sup> Other women reported direct discrimination, in the form of derogatory and discouraging comments they received over the course of their time in ministry. Some are shared here:<sup>132</sup>

"Do you really think this career is appropriate for a woman?"

**- Assistant District Superintendent to a female pastor in their district (ca. 2000)**

"If you think you have a calling on your life, when it's truly your husband who does, you're like the wife of the pilot that thinks she can fly a plane. You will wreck his ministry and everything around you."

**- International missions worker to female pastor applying as a global worker (ca. 2003)**

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<sup>129</sup> Summarized from Interview transcript.

<sup>130</sup> A full copy of the statement is included as Appendix 2B.

<sup>131</sup> Summarized from field notes.

<sup>132</sup> Direct quotes from interview transcripts. Unattributed for confidentiality.

“You had better make sure you’re putting out for your husband.”

“I think you should be planning a sex vacation for your husband.”

**- District Executive member (same individual, multiple statements) to a female conference speaker (ca. 2008-2010)**

“So, you’ll be attending [event]? Would you be willing to lead the ladies devotional that’s taking place while the men are in their meetings?”

**- Proxy request to a female lead pastor, originating with the District Superintendent (ca. 2014)**

“Wow. I didn’t know we ordained women.”

**- Lead Pastor to a female pastor, following her ordination service (ca. 2016)**

“Our District Superintendent hates women.”

**- District employee to a female credential-holder, as explanation for her lack of opportunities (ca. 2018)**

“The way you carry yourself as a wife and a woman is repulsive. Stop overshadowing your husband.”

**- District Executive member to a female lead pastor candidate (ca. 2020)**

The clarity with which each of these women were able to recall such hurtful words is deeply sobering; a moment frozen in their minds in which their worth and value was so clearly diminished, not just by another Christian, but by another member of the clergy. Those who have chosen to retain their credentials, and persevere in the PAOC, describe themselves as ministering while still wounded. One woman remarked, “I spent 3 months lying in my bed, crying, holding by Bible. I understand why people leave the ministry.”<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Interview transcript, S1P1.



## D. Indifference as an Aggravating Factor

Of course, no organization is free of bad behaviour; but valuing environments are created when reports such as these are met with empathy and action. As already noted, prompt and appropriate responses to complaints by clergy over mistreatment appear to be absent in the PAOC; those in the sample who did report these experiences of inequality found either indifference or, as the next section outlines, retaliation and emotional violence.

## 5. Indignity

While indifference ignores and inequality dishonours, indignity is particularly severe in that it contains an embedded violence: it invades.<sup>134</sup> Steed notes that while indignity may appear as “overt workplace bullying... or strong arm tactics,” it always includes “the violation of sacred space that is the essence of violence.”<sup>135</sup> In the ecclesial space, teachings on submission and hierarchy play a significant role in the way individuals process such violations.

Theological teaching on submission and hierarchy were cited in the experiences of indignity for fourteen of the twenty-five participants. Despite being clergy themselves (and, arguably, possessing some degree of spiritual authority in their roles), the impact of being “invaded” was nonetheless consistent with the experiences common to most victims of spiritual abuse, as characterized in Maria’s story:<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Steed, 88.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 88-89.

<sup>136</sup> For a description of common outcomes following spiritual abuse, see Langberg, 126-129.



Understanding ministry in the light of Jesus and the Triune God we serve makes us see ourselves as collaborators, complementary to each other, rather than competitors. Jesus transforms our relationships in every realm, including in the teams where synergistic function is the goal... within the Trinity there are functions that do involve authority / submission, which are best spoken of not as subordination but the submission of equals.<sup>139</sup>

Broadly, the codes which describe experiences of indignity represent the antithesis of Hastings prescription.

### **A. Ranking Common Experiences of Indignity**

The following table provides a ranked list of coded experiences of indignity, common across the sample, following the same conventions as Tables 2.1 and 2.2.

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<sup>139</sup> Hastings, 289-290.

**TABLE 2.3:**  
**Common Experiences of Indignity**

<b>EXPERIENCES OF INDIGNITY (CODES AND PREVALENCE)</b>			
<b>Local Church Experiences</b>		<b>PAOC / Systemic Experiences</b>	
Experiences of indifference that occurred specifically within a local church context (e.g.: church staff interactions).		Experiences of indifference that occurred beyond the local church context (e.g.: district and national interactions).	
<b>CODE</b>	<b>RANK</b>	<b>CODE</b>	<b>RANK</b>
<b>Supervisor Misconduct</b> <i>The experience of being violated by the unreasonable and unprofessional acts of a direct supervisor, where authority is abused to facilitate misconduct.<sup>140</sup></i>	1	<b>Retaliation</b> <i>The experience of being attacked or deliberately harmed after reporting or standing up to misconduct.<sup>141</sup></i>	1
<b>Retaliation</b> <i>The experience of being attacked or deliberately harmed after reporting or standing up to misconduct.</i>	2	<b>Fear of Retaliation</b> <i>The credible fear of being attacked or harmed if one were to report or stand up to misconduct.</i>	2
<b>Intimidation</b> <i>The experience of actual or attempted coercion by a supervisor through direct or veiled threats.</i>	3	<b>Discreditation</b> <i>The experience of losing credibility due to deliberate actions of reputational sabotage, either directly or subtly (e.g.: casting doubt; spreading rumours).</i>	3
<b>Manipulation</b> <i>The experience of being persuaded through indirect means, including attempts to produce negative emotions (e.g.: guilt, fear, etc.) or periphery pressure (e.g.: financial impact to family members) to control behaviour.</i>	4	<b>Lying &amp; Misleading</b> <i>An experiencing of harm due to deliberately false or misleading statements of a person in power.</i>	4

<sup>140</sup> This may include specific boundary violations (such as the inappropriate foray into one’s personal life) or using legitimate functions, such as meetings, for illegitimate purposes such as intimidation or sexual harassment, or any other listed code. Note that Supervisor Misconduct often overlaps with other coded experiences, but does not always. For example, retaliation can be an example of direct supervisor misconduct if, after becoming aware that an employee filed a WorkSafe complaint, an employer schedules their subordinate for multiple mandatory meetings that are thinly veiled excuses for hours of berating comments. Likewise retaliation that takes the form of indirect sabotage of future opportunities through blacklisting would not, in this chart, be coded as “Supervisor Misconduct”; while this certainly is an example of misconduct, this specific code is meant to catalogue instances of direct, not indirect experiences of indignity.

<sup>141</sup> It is important to note that “retaliation” does not include reasonable and legitimate disciplinary action; rather it describes harm unjustly inflicted upon an individual for reporting wrongdoing or resisting abuse.

<b>Discreditation</b> <i>The experience of losing credibility due to deliberate actions of reputational sabotage, either directly or subtly (e.g.: casting doubt; spreading rumours).</i>	5	<b>Coercive Control</b> <i>Experiencing a loss of agency or autonomy outside the workplace due to a person's aggressive behaviour or patterns which may include threats, humiliation, and manipulation.</i>	5
<b>Fraud</b> <i>Experiencing harm due to illegal falsification of records or deliberate factual misrepresentation by a person in power to gain advantage, legally or economically.</i>	6	<b>Ambushed / Breach of Process</b> <i>The experience of being deliberately caught off guard and denied proper process in a disciplinary matter. This includes policy and by-law violations.</i>	6
<b>Ambushed / Breach of Process</b> <i>The experience of being deliberately caught off guard and denied proper process in a disciplinary matter. This includes policy and by-law violations</i>	7	<b>Intimidation</b> <i>The experience of actual or attempted coercion by a supervisor through direct or veiled threats.</i>	7
<b>Lying &amp; Misleading</b> <i>An experiencing of harm due to deliberately false or misleading statements of a person in power.</i>	8	<b>Breach of Confidentiality</b> <i>The experience of having protected or privileged information shared inappropriately and / or without consent, including violations of the Privacy Act.</i>	8
<b>Illegal Dismissal</b> <i>The experience of being dismissed for an unlawful reason, including protected grounds, as specified in the Human Rights Code.</i>	9	<b>Criminal Conduct</b> <i>The experience of damage due to conduct described as an offence in the criminal code of Canada.</i>	9
<b>Sexual Harassment</b> <i>The experience of unwanted and inappropriate sexual remarks or gestures in the workplace.</i>	10	<b>Sexual Harassment</b> <i>The experience of unwanted and inappropriate sexual remarks or gestures in the workplace.</i>	10
<b>Public Humiliation</b> <i>The experience of being deliberately singled out for no legitimate purpose other than to be shamed, ridiculed, and diminished by others.</i>	11	<b>Other Misconduct</b> <i>Forms of complex misconduct that don't fall within other categories.</i>	11
<b>Breach of Confidentiality</b> <i>The experience of having protected or privileged information shared inappropriately and / or without consent, including violations of the Privacy Act.</i>	12		

In each case, the experiences coded in this category describe acts which wholly invade the sacred space of an individual, ultimately resulting in

significant damage: emotionally, spiritually, or economically. When asked to describe the impacts of experiences coded in this category, participants shared statements such as these:<sup>142</sup>

“I stepped away from pastoral leadership and I haven’t looked back. I am taking a break from pastoral work because of this experience. I wish I could say I haven’t been affected, but I have.”

**- Former PAOC Pastor. 5+ years of experience.**

“All church experiences are stripped of any value for me now. We can’t go. Knowing what’s behind the veil, I can’t sit there.”

**- Former PAOC Pastor. 10+ years of experience.**

“I feel like I don’t trust God anymore. It’s not that God is bad, but these institutions ruin it. I get why people leave the church. People’s lives are ripped apart by these behaviours.”

**- Former PAOC Pastor. 15+ years of experience.**

“It devastated my physical health, which is now a long-term struggle. My doctor told me that this was a stress response to what was happening to me [in that situation].”

**- Current PAOC Pastor. 10+ years of experience.**

“It was traumatic. Simple as that. And that trauma has affected how I lead others. It brings a fear to assert any kind of authority. You’re afraid of being perceived to be like them. You’re afraid because you ask yourself ‘What if I’m abusing my power too?’”

**- Current PAOC Pastor. 15+ years of experience.**

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<sup>142</sup> Taken from field notes and interview transcripts. Unassociated with other pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality.

“I used to pray like a warrior conqueror. Now I pray Job prayers. ‘Lord don’t let me die in this pit.’ I had to live in David’s prayer that season. All I could say was ‘Father, why have you forsaken me?’”

- **Current PAOC Pastor. 20+ years of experience.**

## **B. Indignity as Personal Violation**

Among participants who left ministry in the PAOC, the experience of indignity at the hand of a spiritual leader was especially devastating. It is important to call this misuse of power what it truly is: abuse. Experiences of indignity are violent invasions, with a lasting personal devastation. In some cases, research participants shared their experience for the first time, having never spoken out due to a fear of retaliation. In other cases, participants reported having exhausted every means of redress available to them, but ultimately experiencing overwhelming indifference. The researcher finds it incumbent to include multiple examples, at length, within this section to illustrate the severity and proliferation of this abuse.

### **1. Bullying in the Local Church**

I didn’t know why we were going to meet, but my lead pastor ripped me a new one that day. He said that I was a terrible leader and my best days in ministry were behind me. I tried to speak up, but he cut me off saying things like, “How dare you challenge my ideas on youth ministry. I wrote the book on youth ministry!” Yeah, he yelled. A lot. It was a verbal beating. He literally stood over me and berated me. It seemed like forever. He told me explicitly: ‘I can ruin you.’ I was totally intimidated.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Condensed from Interview transcript, S3P1.

## 2. Inappropriate Conversations in the Local Church

My lead pastor was weirdly obsessed with attractive high-school girls who were popular and kept trying to pressure me to spend more energy on them to grow my ministry. He always said I needed to go after the popular and attractive kids, because that's how he did church leadership as well. We butted heads often because I didn't think this was appropriate. But there were lots of things like that. One time he asked the male staff members, "Hey, if your spouse died, who would you shack up with?" I didn't answer. It just felt so inappropriate.<sup>144</sup>

## 3. Humiliation and Threats in the Local Church

He often yelled at me in public, a red-faced angry kind of spectacle. And in private, he threatened to fire me four times. No paperwork though. No HR documentation. No constructive criticism or performance improvement plan. Just threats and walking on eggshells. He would get upset with me because my wife didn't volunteer more, or because a last-minute project he wanted to do wasn't possible. Then he'd pull me into my office and say things like "I've talked about you with other people – a lot of credential-holders in our district don't think highly of you." It was awful, but I needed the income to support my family.<sup>145</sup>

Each of these three credential-holders reported these incidents to their district leadership; in each case no action was taken. Predictably, when incidents like these are reported, the most common response is the statement that the district has no authority over the relationship between lead and staff pastors.

### C. Ambush and Collusion

While Emily was pastoring in the PAOC, her spouse was undergoing significant treatment related to a health crisis. One summer afternoon she received an unexpected call from another credential-holder, an individual who also served on the DE. With no forewarning, he insisted she meet with

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<sup>144</sup> Condensed from Interview transcript, S3P4.

<sup>145</sup> Condensed from Interview transcript, S1P6.



him that day to discuss an urgent, but confidential matter. No other information was given, and she reluctantly found childcare in order to oblige the request.

To Emily's surprise, the DE member was not alone when she arrived; she was introduced to other credential-holders in attendance, and promptly informed of an allegation of personal misconduct. Emily described her reaction as stunned, "I [couldn't] even put a sentence together," she said. The surprise tribunal presented allegations characterized by facts grossly out of context and outright falsehoods; but whenever she attempted to provide an explanation, she was denied the opportunity to speak freely.

"I'm stuttering through [my response]," she noted, and "[He] puts his hand up and said, 'I'm going to stop you...'" The DE member proceeded to interrogate her, insisting on binary answers to statements riddled with half-truths. Overwhelmed and afraid, Emily was finally told she could refute the allegations, but if she did, they would be made public, and she would be suspended from her job while a full investigation into her private life was conducted. She was then given a second option: she could write a confession and resign from her pastoral role, thus quietly avoiding the ordinary proceedings prescribed in the PAOC Constitution and By-Laws.

At no point in the process was Emily provided a copy of the By-Laws (which do not allow for this sort of informal hearing), nor was she given the opportunity to seek council, or to confer with her employer directly (despite the demand that she resign from her job). Rather, she was told she needed to make a decision, alone, before leaving the meeting.

I immediately thought of my husband. There was no way he would get through a public controversy in his present state of health. And they pressured me, they told me I had to decide before I left the room. So I protected my family the only way I knew how. I signed a paper saying that I would not contest the allegations, and I agreed to resign.<sup>146</sup>

She would later discover that the allegations brought to her attention that day had been made almost six months earlier, and that a covert "investigation"

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<sup>146</sup> Condensed from interview transcript.

had been taking place without her knowledge all this time (another clear violation of the by-laws). When Emily returned home after the meeting, debriefing the encounter and its immediate fallout with her family, she realized she had made a huge mistake: she was innocent of the allegation against her, but had made a false confession out of fear. To make matters even worse, the public announcement given at her church the following Sunday declared she had been terminated for misconduct, which was not what she agreed to at all.

“People thought I had had an affair, or had acted inappropriately with a minor,” she explained. After the announcement was made, she approached the District Superintendent to explain the coercive circumstances around her confession, rescind her statement, and ask for help restoring her reputation. He replied, “what’s done is done,” and was unwilling to provide an opportunity for redress. Instead, he insisted she participate in the clergy restoration program.

Emily’s experience is a case study on indignity inflicted by an institution. This was grotesque violation: secretly investigated, blindsided by allegations, intimidated, denied due process, shamed and, ultimately, isolated.

I was told I couldn’t talk to anyone at my church anymore. All of these people in my life were suddenly ripped out. I was told I needed to get permission just to continue my relationships with my friends.<sup>147</sup>

Far from being a series of missteps or mistakes, this type of experience was intentionally orchestrated. It represents a blatant abuse of power on behalf of the employer (who first received the allegation), the District Superintendent (who authorized the covert investigation and subsequent intervention), and the DE (who sidestepped due process with an agenda driven by a pre-determination of guilt).

Emily trusted that, as a credential-holder, she would be afforded the protection of policies described in the PAOC by-laws, and that as a Christian

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<sup>147</sup> Condensed from field notes.

she would be afforded the dignity of dialogue if there were concerns with her personal ethics or morality. Unfortunately, this blatant disregard for the process set out in the PAOC Constitution and By-Laws is not unique to Emily's situation. Within the research sample, disregard for process was relatively common.<sup>148</sup>

#### **D. The Use of Fear to Silence**

In addition to issues of indifference that have already been outlined, the data revealed that fear of retaliation is a significant factor which enables abuse of power to go unreported, and therefore unchallenged. Once again, the perspectives of participants speak powerfully to this reality:<sup>149</sup>

“Institutional loyalty is a requirement for promotion in the PAOC. It's literally an “old boys club”: a small group of men who have power and influence to decide and control what happens. So, I went outside the PAOC for help because I had no other choice; but I was further ostracized for that. I think it actually changed the outcome of my situation. There are people more upset that I went outside than they are with what happened to me. But “dealing with things in house” only works for those with power in that house.”<sup>150</sup>

#### **- Identity Withheld**

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<sup>148</sup> This type of sidestepping takes multiple forms, whether signaled by statements such as “the process technically requires [stipulation], however it would save us all a lot of time and process if we could just [proposed solution],” or as pressure, the way Maria experienced: “No one would take action, despite the evidence. And they really encouraged me not to file a formal complaint,” (Field notes). In both cases, the by-laws that exist are disregarded when convenient.

<sup>149</sup> Taken from field notes and interview transcripts. Unassociated with other pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality.

<sup>150</sup> This view, that perhaps the worst thing a Christian can do is take a matter before authorities outside the church, is common within the evangelical tradition. Books such as Albert Poirier's *The Peacemaking Pastor* (Baker, 2006) use pejoratives to discourage critical evaluation of when it may be most appropriate for Christians to engage civil authorities (219). Casting unforgiveness and outside intervention as sins far greater than initial offenses (108-109), Poirier makes no distinction between abuses of power (179-181) and ordinary conflicts between believers, applying an inappropriately simplistic model across the board. One must not underestimate the influence of these types of resources and the philosophies behind them.

"I knew if I approached the district, it was [career] suicide."

**- Identity Withheld**

"I would affirm that there is a very real fear of retaliation in the PAOC. The cost of reporting is huge. Even if those in power are held accountable, you'll be marginalized and discredited for being disloyal because you came forward."

**- Identity Withheld**

"My district superintendent had this line that "The PAOC is like the mafia." It terrified me and proved to be true. If you're not loyal, everyone will know. You have to show that you can take abuse in order to get on the mafia's good side."

**- Identity Withheld**

"I tried to get help, but nobody would. Everyone just passes the buck. One of the General Officers asked, "Are you sure you want to continue? There will be an impact on you, your job and reputation if we approach that leader about this." They did everything they could to discourage me from proceeding and that's when I realized that we probably don't hear about 80% of the actual issues in the PAOC because people are afraid of losing their jobs."

**- Identity Withheld**

"I didn't feel safe to file a complaint in the PAOC or even with WorkSafe because my pastor knew everyone. His political connections meant there was no way I could take any action. I knew the Board trusted him, and that my complaint would never be validated or taken seriously. He was on the District Executive so I couldn't go to my Superintendent for help either."

**- Identity Withheld**

“What he was doing was wrong, but I was genuinely concerned about my reputation. He always talks about all the people he knows, and I’m concerned what he might say about me. The way things are insinuated, you get the message. I felt like I would get in big trouble if I were talk to the district about what was going on.”

**- Identity Withheld**

“I couldn’t approach the district or anyone else for help about these situations because of the “honour code” that you don’t undermine your lead pastor and you don’t complain. Whatever you say to the District Superintendent could be used against you.”

**- Identity Withheld**

“Hell no! I know that if I reach out to the District Superintendent or the National Office for help with this situation, I will be labeled a “complainer”. And I’ll lose ministry opportunities. To continue on, I’ve had to be a good soldier and refuse to tell the truth about what happened. Otherwise, I’ll be iced out.”

**- Identity Withheld**

“There is no place to heal or seek help without being perceived as a troublemaker. If you talk to National Office, they say they can’t do anything anyway. The risk of reaching out for help anywhere else is too high – I would look like a gossip and risk my future. If I shared what happened to me, I would be the one who is disciplined for gossip, because it’s always the credential-holder who “has a problem” and “needs therapy”.”

**- Identity Withheld**

“Not once did I have someone who was my advocate; when you’re dealing with a credential-holder that’s further up in the hierarchy, you’re told that you’re dealing with “God’s anointed”. So, when they’re involved, and the problem is with them, you will never have anyone to help you.”

**- Identity Withheld**

## **E. Retaliation**

Far from being an urban legend, the fear of retaliation shared by the participants in this study appears by all indicators to be rooted in substantial evidence, with several participants sharing the impact of retaliation when they took action that was discouraged by empowered clergy:

“So my spouse had a job offer from another Christian organization. And it was suddenly rescinded because one of the district officers made a proactive phone call to them. My husband wasn’t involved in the ministry, and nobody at the district was listed as a reference for him. They blatantly meddled after I took action against them.”

### **- Identity Withheld**

“I tried to get another job. I was so close, and then it came crashing down. The recruiter wouldn’t give me a reason, just that he had spoken to the District Superintendent. That’s when I realized that I had been blacklisted for speaking out. He was telling people lies about me.”

### **- Identity Withheld**

“A few years ago, we were in the US. I had a meeting with a leader from another denomination about an opportunity. The first thing this leader said was that he ran into my district superintendent at a conference the week before, and my superintendent told him that my family was going through a lot, and that I was in counselling. “Your superintendent said he met with your counsellors because you’re really making life hard for [acquaintances] of his,” he shared. A total breach of confidentiality. I was in counselling over a personal matter while a credential-holder, his friend, was being investigated by the PAOC for serious misconduct. Totally inappropriate.”

### **- Identity Withheld**

Across the sample, a clear pattern was demonstrated: in the case of power differentials, when clergy with less power speak out against clergy with more power (due to alleged misbehaviour), the result was always one of the following scenarios:

1. The subordinate clergy is informed there is no help available for them, and subsequently marginalized (as if tainted by the controversy).
2. The subordinate clergy is initially believed, but the alleged abuser actively misleads an investigative body made up of acquaintances. There is minimal scrutiny, no action is taken, and the subordinate is severely discredited or marginalized.
3. The subordinate is believed, and an investigation verifies the legitimacy of their allegation. Action may be taken.<sup>151</sup> While technically vindicated, the subordinate clergy is informally labeled a “troublemaker” and marginalized from future opportunities as if tainted by the controversy.

There were no cases where reported incidents of indignity, inflicted by clergy with more power than their own, were appropriately investigated with the complainant afforded some degree of protection from retaliatory action. Thus, there appears to be little incentive for credential-holders to come forward and name any bad behaviour that they observe.

In some cases, lying and misleading goes beyond common ethics and enters the realm of fraud, extortion or other behaviour characterized as criminal. This illegal behaviour must be explored separately.

## **6. A Special Note on Illegal Behaviour**

It must be noted that allegations of behaviour that are illegal, on some level, run throughout multiple narratives and categories, and have already been noted: employment law violations,<sup>152</sup> various forms of harassment,

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<sup>151</sup> To say “action was taken” may be misleading. While there are several incidents where offending clergy were significantly disciplined or dismissed, none of those consequences were a direct result of a complainant’s verified report of misconduct; rather, those dismissals were the result of subsequent and unrelated violations more than one year later.

<sup>152</sup> As noted, accounts of extended work weeks, unpaid hours, and constructive dismissal were common in the sample.

discrimination on protected grounds,<sup>153</sup> or failure to protect employees who experienced harassment within the workplace. For these issues to persist within the ecclesial structure is, of course, especially, troubling. This section specifically means to highlight behaviour that, when reasonably described, is likely to be punishable by a judicial body. Descriptions of experiences that likely meets these qualifications are coded as indicated in Table 2.4.

### A. Ranking Common Experiences of Illegal Behaviour

The following table provides a ranked list of coded experiences of illegal behaviour, common across the sample, following the same conventions as Tables 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3.

**TABLE 2.4:**  
**Common Experiences of Illegal Behaviour**

<b>ILLEGAL ACTIVITY (CODES AND PREVALENCE)</b>			
<b>Local Church Experiences</b>		<b>PAOC / Systemic Experiences</b>	
Experiences of indifference that occurred specifically within a local church context (e.g.: church staff interactions).		Experiences of indifference that occurred beyond the local church context (e.g.: district and national interactions).	
<b>CODE</b>	<b>RANK</b>	<b>CODE</b>	<b>RANK</b>
<b>Non-Criminal Law Violation</b> <i>Incidents elsewhere categorized that specifically relate to the violation of common law, labour law or other relevant codes. Examples in the data include breach of contract and employment standards violations.</i>	1	<b>Human Rights Violation</b> <i>Incidents elsewhere categorized that specifically relate to the violation of the Human Rights Code. Examples in the data include discrimination based on race or sex, and harassment.</i>	1
<b>Human Rights Violation</b> <i>Incidents elsewhere categorized that specifically relate to the violation of the Human Rights Code. Examples in the data include discrimination based on race or sex, and harassment.</i>	2	<b>Criminal Law Violation</b> <i>Incidents elsewhere categorized that specifically relate to the violation of criminal law. One (1) example in the data: extortion.</i>	2

<sup>153</sup> Specific instances of filtering resumes for reasons of gender and race have been noted.



<b>Criminal Law Violation</b> <i>Incidents elsewhere categorized that specifically relate to the violation of criminal law. One (1) example in the data: fraud.</i>	3		
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As previously noted, experiences that appear to be violations of common law or employment law were quite common within the sample within the local church context. Unlike alleged violations of criminal law, the threat of punitive action for these acts rests solely on an employee’s willingness to take legal action upon themselves, a burden that clergy seem unwilling to bear at present. In contrast, violations of the Human Rights Code (which cover issues of discrimination and harassment on protected grounds) are less frequent, however often more serious, especially when patterns of behaviour are clear.<sup>154</sup>

Alleged criminal law violations, while most rare, are especially serious. These codes represent experiences that, when described, appear reasonably likely to be indictable as a criminal offence in Canada: namely, an instance of fraud (in the local context) and criminal extortion (in the systemic context). When potential criminal conduct was identified in interviews, it always appeared as a reactionary development; an escalation after other means to control a situation did not yield the desired results.

## **B. Criminal Extortion<sup>155</sup>**

In one example, a member of the clergy reported being extorted into resigning their job and signing an NDA while under threat of personal harm, specifically in the form of reputational damage and resultant financial ruin

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<sup>154</sup> One participant was able to demonstrate clear patterns of repetitive racial harassment in the local context; two others were able to demonstrate a pattern of discriminatory exclusion based on sex, including filtering resumes. Another female described a pattern of sexually inappropriate and demeaning comments by a well-known senior member of the clergy.

<sup>155</sup> See “Criminal Code of Canada,” No. 346 (1), C-46 R.S.C. (1985).

through a blackmail scheme.<sup>156</sup> The alleged perpetrator was stated to have admitted this manipulation scheme to a third party who subsequently disclosed the scheme to the victim. This course of action allegedly took place following the supervising clergy's unsuccessful search for legitimate grounds to terminate this employee. As the victim of this scheme was unable to afford legal services, the fear for their livelihood superseded their willingness to fight.

I knew I didn't do anything wrong, but they said they had all this evidence. Even though I would win [a PAOC] disciplinary hearing, it wouldn't matter, because they're so powerful and I wouldn't be able to get a job after that.<sup>157</sup>

This participant thus signed an NDA, which prohibits them from sharing this experience publicly or disclosing other evidence of misconduct.

### **C. Fraud**

In another instance, a member of the clergy experienced sudden health complications at work. They were advised by their employer to appeal to their physician for the note appropriate for a disability claim. Only after the paperwork was filed and medical treatment began did the leader discover the organization's disability insurance benefits policy had lapsed.

In an ill-advised scheme to make good on the commitment made, the supervisor allegedly revised the employer portion of the federal paperwork to reflect a "laid off" status, without informing the disabled pastor. Upon receiving notice of this change by mail, the disabled pastor questioned their employer, who admitted the lapsed insurance policy, and confided that the organization had determined to top-up the standard unemployment benefit (in cash and "under the table"), provided that this member of the clergy

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<sup>156</sup> The perpetrator of this act had claimed (to the victim) to have damning physical evidence of inappropriate behaviour; the fabricated props to enhance the ruse.

<sup>157</sup> Source withheld for confidentiality reasons.

would go along with the scheme.<sup>158</sup> Uncomfortable with this fraudulent arrangement, he refused,<sup>159</sup> and was subsequently asked to resign and sign a NDA in exchange for severance.

#### **D. The Role of NDAs**

The role that NDAs play in these types of situations are especially noteworthy. Originally designed to protect trade secrets from competitors, it is difficult to discern if there is any legitimate use for an NDA by a Christian organization. Certainly, weaponizing NDAs in order to safeguard a personal or institutional reputation in the face of misconduct is unethical, and considering that a standard confidentiality clause in an employment contract is sufficient to provide for safeguarding organizational information or other ordinary data, the justification for NDA use is especially unclear. As it stands, there is no guideline within the PAOC on how and when an NDA may be used. Even in this relatively small sample, the indiscriminate use of NDAs appears to be a problem which requires a response.

### **7. Chapter Conclusion**

Overall, the evidence that experiences of inequality, indignity, and even illegal behaviour have gone unchecked is significant; further the impact of indifference toward clergy who have experienced these things has been costly. The narratives that have emerged in this research are ultimately indicative of a culture where abuse of power has proceeded unchecked, and likely remains quite prevalent. The stark absence of reporting structures or whistleblower policies play a key role in the experiences emerging from the

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<sup>158</sup> In addition to violating the *Employment Insurance Act* (No. 38 (1), c.23 S.C.), and the *Criminal Code of Canada* (No. 380 (1), C-46 R.S.C.), these undocumented payments would likely have also violated the legislation that governs financial rules for registered charities. There would have also be non-monetary penalties for both the employer and the employee for engaging in this scheme, as detailed in the Service Canada “Employment and Insurance Fraud” fact sheet (2018). As it stands, knowingly falsifying the ROE is an offence which can carry significant consequences in its own right.

<sup>159</sup> Federal unemployment benefits also require the recipient to testify bi-weekly that they are looking for work; as the pastor was receiving medical care, he was also being asked to lie about this status.

sample group, as does the fear of retaliation embedded within the ministerial culture. In this light, the risk that clergy who fall victim to abuses of power will continue to be silenced is especially troubling.

Nonetheless, the data also presents an opportunity for significant theological reflection on the embedded operant theology that has underpinned these experiences, as well as broader questions about power, anthropology, and the reification of Christian ethics. These subjects will be engaged more fully in chapter four, following a review of the relevant literature.

# Chapter 3:

## Literature Review

### 1. A Note on the Absence of Specific Literature

While literature on the general nature and philosophy of power is abundant (and reflective of varying Christian theological perspectives), the same cannot be said for literature concerning the role of power within inter-clergy relationships. Serious academic work has been undertaken regarding the nature of ecclesial structure and the church's relationship with power, but in almost every available case these works reflect on the relationship between the church and the broader world; an examination of external, not internal, dynamics. Conversely while a considerable body of literature has emerged around the issue of abuse of power within the church over the past twenty years, this literature focuses almost exclusively on the relationship between clergy and congregants, and not on the interpersonal dynamics that exist between members of the clergy themselves.<sup>160</sup>

In the absence of a large body of literature related to the primary question of this research project, I have engaged in a transdisciplinary review of significant work that intersects with, and at times runs adjacent to, the focus of study. The significance of this study is, in part, to fill a gap in knowledge, and by appealing to formal theology outside of the PAOC (the voice of the academy proper) a more informed theological dialogue between the Four Voices can take place in chapter four. Great care has been taken to locate material that has specific relevance to the focus and emerging themes of this project. Specifically, this chapter presents a summary of significant literature that speaks to the overlapping themes of power, Christian ethics, theological anthropology, the abuse of power (specifically within an ecclesial

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<sup>160</sup> The two notable exceptions here are Chuck DeGroat's book, *When Narcissism Comes to Church* (which takes a broad and inclusive view of the problem of narcissism, including the impact of narcissistic behaviour on other members of the clergy) and the work of Paul Beasley-Murray in *Power for God's Sake* which will be discussed separately.

context), and an approach to reflective praxis concerning the same. Take note that this is not an exhaustive list of literature, but rather a spotlight on key material that fills the gaps in the dialogue. For a complete list of material engaged, refer to the bibliography.

## 2. A Philosophy and Theology of Power for the Church

Without failing to acknowledge the significance of Michel Foucault, Max Weber, John Locke, Karl Marx, or Thomas Hobbes in the quest to define “power” (and qualify the nature of its use), it is the exploration of mediated power, specifically within the framework of Christian faith, that emerges as the urgent task in this study. How Christians think about (or ought to think about) power in the light of their faith presents a significant lens through which the research data must be analyzed.<sup>161</sup> Engaging the work of Richard Niebuhr and Jürgen Moltmann, Stephen Sykes summarizes three perspectives in *Power and Christian Theology* that are especially helpful in arriving at some kind of model from which to proceed.

First, that an ordinary, “popular” and imprecise definition of power is appropriate when engaging the subject. Sykes argues that the historical discourse around power, even cross-culturally, is essentially dialectic; thus, an attempt to capture an entirely precise definition of power may result in something that is effectively misleading.<sup>162</sup> There are many ways of exercising power, and definitions claiming universality may be unable to address the dynamic means through which power is expressed in an unanticipated context. As such, Sykes argues that theologians must pay close attention to the popular definitions of power emerging within their culture, as these reflect the social reality of how power is used in the real world that Christians

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<sup>161</sup> This is, in some ways, an attempt to discover the normative theological voice which, while always mediated by one or more of the other voices, must speak authoritatively to questions posed about power, humanity and ethics.

<sup>162</sup> Sykes, 5-7; Sykes points out that the dialectic of Greek ἐξουσία (the freedom to do a thing), versus δύναμις (the ability to do a thing), the Roman *auctoritas* (informal social power) versus *potestas* (legal power), and the German *macht* (power) versus *herrschaft* (domination) all demonstrate the nature of the discourse around power across culture and history.

must inhabit. Thus, simple definitions, such as, “power is the ability to influence...”,<sup>163</sup> though not comprehensive, can be useful.

Second, Sykes speaks consistently to the Christian perspective on the origin of power; that all power exercised by human beings is, in fact, an exercise of mediated power that finds its ultimate source in God. This carries significant implications, not least of which that human beings are divinely accountable for their uses of power, both small and great.

Third, Sykes asserts that a comprehensive Christian theology of power must differentiate itself from the work of secular philosophers by becoming uniquely centred on the cross of Christ, and that it is the mortification of power that comprises the definitive contribution of the Christian faith to the wider discourse.<sup>164</sup> While Sykes makes a formidable case, cruciformity in isolation presents a narrow theology of power which could benefit from the added dimensionality assumed by Moltmann, namely that “the primal power of life, [is that] which Paul calls in Romans 8:11 the ‘indwelling’ resurrection Spirit of God”.<sup>165</sup> Indeed, God’s power is made visible in the cross, the resurrection, and in the work of the Holy Spirit; and all three are necessary to comprehend the fundamental reversals that a Christian ethic of power, emerging from the New Testament, uniquely imposes upon secular models of power.<sup>166</sup> Sykes’ framework thus contributes to the formation of a normative metric for evaluating the ongoing exercise of power within the church by approaching the question of whether power observed (for instance, in the research data) is exercised “Christianly”: in meekness, humility, and in service to others.

As the exercise of power can take many forms (and arriving at a clear description of those forms is functionally necessary), the metric emerging from Sykes’ work benefits from a psychosocial perspective on the types of

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<sup>163</sup> Nye, 1.

<sup>164</sup> Sykes, 16.

<sup>165</sup> Moltmann-Wendel and Moltmann, 5.

<sup>166</sup> Cf. John 13:1-7, Matt 28:5-10, Acts 2:22-38.

human power, and here Diane Langberg's descriptions are most helpful.<sup>167</sup> These dynamic expressions of human power, for both Langberg and Sykes, serve as evidence of God's divine plan for human agency, which must not be impinged, even as it is held accountable.<sup>168</sup>

A brief exploration of contemporary evangelical literature on power (which speaks to the tradition within which this study is located) finds that definitions of power, when given, are generally qualified within the context of a careful (and sometimes wary) acknowledgement of the immense capacity for harm when that power is misused. For example, Katelyn Beaty follows up an excellent working definition of power ("the innate human ability to steward the world, to glorify God and bless creation and fellow image bearers")<sup>169</sup> with an immediately acknowledgment that with such glorious potential comes the real possibility of misuse.<sup>170</sup> Viewed holistically, warnings such as these may be taken as an important indicator that the term "power" is simply not a neutral term within the evangelical tradition. Power (at least from a Christian perspective) is the potential of an individual to bless or curse God's creation, including other human beings; by the volume of books on the subject, it appears the latter which has become a source of growing popular concern.<sup>171</sup>

Steven Ogden provides a helpful explanation as to why Christian literature and dialogue on the nature of power may follow this pattern so

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<sup>167</sup> Langberg, 8-10; Langberg lists the types of power as: verbal power (the use of words to influence), emotional power (the capacity to influence another's emotions), physical power (the ability to exert strength), charisma (socially dynamic influence), specialized knowledge (the capacity to control based on providing or withholding information), authority (formal or informal leadership), economic power (the use of financial means to influence), spiritual power (the engagement of the mystical to exert influence), and community power (the collective influence of a group of people on an individual).

<sup>168</sup> Langberg, 10.

<sup>169</sup> Beaty, 69.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> The upcoming release of such titles as *Reckoning with Power: Why the Church Fails When It's on the Wrong Side of Power* (Brazos, January 2024), *Forgiveness after Trauma: A Path to Find Healing and Empowerment* (Brazos, March 2024), *Holy Ghosted: Spiritual Anxiety, Religious Trauma, and the Language of Abuse* (Eerdmans, April 2024), *Disobedient Women* (Worthy, June 2024), and *Hope in Our Scars: Finding the Bride of Christ in the Underground of Disillusionment* (Zondervan, July 2024) demonstrate the prominence of this conversation within the evangelical subculture.



closely: there is a uniquely heightened potential for corruption and power abuse within the Christian context.<sup>172</sup> Ogden argues that the great power reversals that the teachings of Christ present create opportunities for exploitation by those whose personal models of power have not yet been converted.

In terms of theorization, there is a cluster of concepts like forgiveness, grace, charity, and obedience, which are representative of Christian piety in particular, and ecclesial discourse in general, which are open to exploitation. As such, this book contends that the concept of obedience is a major factor. For example, sovereign power exploits the axiom that good sheep are obedient, and as obedient sheep they should forgive others, just as Jesus the good shepherd commanded (Matt 18:21-22). Moreover, the culture of obedience goes hand in hand with a culture of secrecy. In fact, it is indispensable to its operation.<sup>173</sup>

Ogden further asserts that when Christians fail to redeem the models of power they inherit from the world (whether personally or institutionally), there is an even greater susceptibility for interpersonal harm than that which exists in other contexts. A critical question emerges here: to what extent does a Christian theology of power foster a practical awareness and a deeper understanding of the heightened capacity for power abuse within the Christian framework?

In this light, it is pertinent to reflect just as much on the absence of systems and structures designed to mitigate the abuse of power as it is to reflect on any instances of abuse themselves. Philosophies of power, whether conceptual or applied, must therefore take into account both the objects and

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<sup>172</sup> Ogden argues that this has long been an historical reality, and that the church has often rewarded parishioner compliance while sacralizing a sovereign view of their own authority (p. 28, 51). While this practice has been, at times, discouraged (e.g.: *Pastoral Rule* by Gregory the Great), it has also been grotesquely promoted (e.g.: *On Ecclesial Power* by Giles of Rome), and as the Anglican Doctrine Commission so aptly points out, discussions on power peak within culture whenever powerlessness or authoritarian action become especially visible (Church of England, 33).

<sup>173</sup> Ogden. 8; Ogden's comments are especially poignant in the light of Poirier's assertions to this effect (108-109).

subjects of power as being theologically significant. To this end, we turn to the discussion of human beings themselves.

### 3. Theological Anthropology and Vocation

The work of the Anglican Doctrine Commission in *Being Human: A Christian Understanding of Personhood* presents a wide and helpful summary of the Christian tradition in relation to this subject that is concise enough to be wielded within the scope of this project.<sup>174</sup> The Doctrine Commission asserts that humanity is foremost defined by its relationship to God, “the Almighty”: made in his image, mediating his power.<sup>175</sup> This requires that Christian reflections on the nature of power take into account the ordinary human experience where agency is most commonly expressed. The Doctrine Commission asserts that human vocation is actually rooted in one’s identity as an empowered being who, ultimately, exercises agency that is entrusted, not independently generated.<sup>176</sup>

*Being Human* concludes, with Ogden and Sykes, that this is indeed the basis for an ethic of human accountability: if the power humans exercise is extrinsic, not inherent, then the human use of power must be morally accountable to its originator. To this end, the literature points toward an examination of the ways that one’s use of power is experienced by others, and how those experiences align with the Christian vision for humanity. This expands the dimensionality of both Sykes’ and Ogden’s call for an audit of expressions of power within the Christian context, both individually and institutionally.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> For brevity sake, only the discussion on personhood and power will be referenced here, though there is much more that could be added via reflection on the sections entitled “Money”, “Sex”, and “Time”.

<sup>175</sup> Church of England, 32, 45; The Doctrine Commission’s view of humanity is complementary to underlying perspectives presented by Sykes, Langberg, and Ogden.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 40, 49; The Doctrine Commission takes great care to acknowledge where the misuse of ecclesial power has caused tremendous harm in addition to providing a framework for critique. Further, it pays specific attention to the expression of power as patriarchy (a cultural and sociological reality), domination (the capacity to impose one’s will), authority (the claim of legitimacy), a sign (the implied relationship between a display of power and the will of God), and as malignancy (the ability of power to corrupt those who wield it) (*Ibid.*, 33-38).

Finally, because the person of Jesus Christ is central to a Christian understanding of human identity, the Doctrine Commission suggests that any Christian conversation on power, including its impact on other people, must also include a reflection on the incarnation, passion and resurrection of Christ.<sup>178</sup> Thus, as previously noted (but now more clearly defined), the crucified and resurrected Christ presents a paradox that leads to a radical redefinition of power which critiques all other modalities, while yet providing a unique contribution in itself: power as an expression of love.<sup>179</sup>

#### **4. The Abuse of Power within the Church**

In the light of the call for Christians to embrace an ethic of power that is rooted in love and service to others, the expanding volume of contemporary literature about the misuse of power by Christian leaders is especially disheartening. This growing body of work provides an heuristic for the nature of the abuse of power within the ecclesial space, in addition to serving as lagging evidence of a systemic problem. Over the course of this research, four particular texts emerged with special relevance to the findings in chapter two. As each of them describe and diagnose different ways power is misused in the church, they provide a map within which to place the data collected in this study. As the descriptions they contain often bear a striking resemblance to the firsthand accounts in chapter two, they are especially helpful in interpreting those experiences.

##### **A. Mullen: Something's Not Right**

Mullen's work emerges from the analysis of approximately 1000 cases of clergy abuse between 2015 – 2020,<sup>180</sup> and is especially helpful as it effectively distinguishes 'abuse' from other forms of unpleasant behaviour and benign

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 45-46.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>180</sup> Mullen, 3.

personality conflict. Mullen defines the abuse of power as “any action that takes power from another in an attempt to use them”,<sup>181</sup> and notes that this behaviour does not have to express itself physically in order to constitute abuse: psychological, financial, and verbal forms of abuse inflict tremendous harm on their victims.<sup>182</sup>

Whether clergy possess formal power (such as a position), or informal power (such as social influence derived from longstanding friendships with other power brokers), the mere existence of a power differential provides a structural opportunity to abuse a subordinate. Of course, not every person in a position of power abuses those they lead; so Mullen turns toward understanding which factors may increase the likelihood of exploitation.<sup>183</sup>

First, abusive behaviour can be a form of unhealthy self-medication; if a leader is “empty, narcissistic, and hungry, they’ll likely feverishly quest for legitimacy and meaning, collecting audiences, platforms, awards, and luxuries to justify the position and their title”.<sup>184</sup> Second, abusive behaviour may be rooted in the goal of protection and preservation of a role or institution (particularly if the potential for reputational damage threatens the stability of either).<sup>185</sup> Third, abusive behaviour may stem from an inculcated sense of tribal loyalty; for example, when a clergy member’s personal security or advancement are felt to be linked directly to their ability to “do what must be done” (for the so-called good of the tribe), they may be willing to perpetrate acts they would otherwise classify as wrong.<sup>186</sup>

Mullen concludes that behaviours for facilitating abuse follow a predictable pattern; there is a “playbook of tactics”<sup>187</sup> that is consistent among

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Mullen cautions against trying to diagnose motivation (noting that even among those who do perpetuate abuse, the motivation may be unclear) and insists that communities should focus on identifying toxic behaviour (106). Notwithstanding, Mullen does provide three general motivations for abusive behaviour as a means to contextualize the types of behaviours most often observed.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

abusive leaders within Christian institutions. Summarized, the abuser's "playbook" consists of:

1. **Flattery.**

Developing a culture of constant praise where sincere and necessary criticism is culturally disallowed.<sup>188</sup>

2. **Lavish favours.**

Creating dependence in order to exercise greater control and influence, (for example, low base salaries with generous, albeit unpredictable, bonuses at the leader's disposal).<sup>189</sup>

3. **Rushed vulnerability.**

Calculated moments of oversharing in order to manipulate sympathy or give others a false sense of being a confidante.<sup>190</sup>

4. **Disfiguring another's identity.**

Creating sustained and inappropriate pressure for conformity to the abuser's style and values until independence is diminished (this is a form of grooming).<sup>191</sup>

5. **Multifaceted disrespect.**

Using public and private humiliation in order to erode strength and weaken resolve, allowing for greater control.<sup>192</sup>

6. **Creating anxiety.**

Creating chaos or imposing of arbitrary rules with severe consequences in order to destabilize a person's ability to make decisions (this dismantles their agency).<sup>193</sup>

7. **Isolation techniques.**

Attempts to separate a person from other relationships, institutional support, or outside knowledge. May involve punishing or intimidating

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 41

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 45

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., 56

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., 59

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., 62

those who engage outside the organization without the leader's permission.<sup>194</sup>

**8. Direct intimidation.**

The use of either implied or overt threats to silence someone and keep them from confiding their experiences in others.<sup>195</sup>

**9. Reversal tactics.**

The sudden adoption of a victim stance, accompanied by a plea for compassion and mercy, as a means of manipulation through guilt when other tactics are ineffective.<sup>196</sup>

## **B. DeGroat: When Narcissism Comes to Church**

Whereas Mullen seeks to identify the general characteristics of power abuse within the church, DeGroat suggests that the root cause of this abuse may be diagnosable narcissism, both individually and systemically.

Sadly, narcissism in the clergy is under studied. When I did my doctoral work over a decade ago, I discovered vast resources on pastoral well-being, including studies on burnout, addiction, and depression. I found popular articles on narcissistic leadership but an absence of studies on the prevalence of narcissism... In my own work, which includes fifteen years of psychological testing among pastors, the vast majority of ministerial candidates test on the spectrum of Cluster B DSM-V personality disorders, which feature narcissistic traits most prominently. The rates are even higher among church planters.<sup>197</sup>

While DeGroat speaks broadly to the experiences of parishioners who have been negatively impacted by abusive Christian leaders, it is of particular significance that the pretext for his research was a personal experience of clergy-to-clergy abuse at the hands of a narcissistic pastor.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 72-77

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 85

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., 89-97

<sup>197</sup> DeGroat, 19.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 14.

DeGroat identifies the five environmental characteristics of communities where narcissistic leaders remain generally unchallenged in their abuse of others as follows:

1. They are hierarchical structures, with a male dominant and well-networked elite group of leaders.
2. They contain personality-driven cultures, where charismatic individuals are given automatic preferential standing and others are formally or informally subordinated.
3. They employ shame-based systems where confidence is informally equated with holiness and spiritual authority. Members are diminished or marginalized if they question the validity or inspiration of elevated leaders.
4. They are loyalty-oriented systems, where honest feedback and meaningful accountability are absent, and critique is perceived as an attack on the institution (and thus punished accordingly).
5. They are organized as a success-driven enterprise, where “results” are deemed to be the highest indicator of God’s favour and approval. For example, leaders will be protected from scrutiny as long as there are reports of people “getting saved”, church growth, or well attended meetings.<sup>199</sup>

Further, DeGroat notes that Christian denominations with non-traditional ordination processes, where “young leaders are snatched up and deployed without proper training or soul formation, simply because they’ve been successful in other arenas”,<sup>200</sup> suffer even higher rates of abuse within their

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<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 21-23; DeGroat uses the term “malignant narcissism” as a clinical description of those who land on the edge of the narcissism scale as judged solely by their behaviours, not as a pejorative label of individuals; the term is likewise used throughout this project in the same context.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 21.

ranks.<sup>201</sup> The limited vetting of untrained young-adults who are invited into the bright lights of a ministry platform create a much greater potentiality of both being abused by a narcissistic senior leader, and of becoming one of the same. DeGroat notes that while narcissism can be an individual psychological diagnosis, it should also be considered as a pathological description of a system that has taken on and internalized over-arching narcissistic traits.

Besides providing clear descriptions of narcissistic behaviour that are useful in categorizing the actions described within the sample, DeGroat also provides a helpful framework for understanding the cause: the recipe is unhealed shame and brokenness, which must be addressed both carefully and compassionately.<sup>202</sup>

### **C. Langberg: Redeeming Power**

Langberg contributes to a foundational understanding of power as she summarizes and reflects on fifty years of practice with victims of trauma.<sup>203</sup> Of further interest is her extensive exploration of the themes which emerged within the research data, particularly the impact of sex, race, and positional authority in abuse of power. Langberg's tenure as a psychologist and researcher is evident through her expert contextualization of these concepts and thus *Redeeming Power* provides a comprehensive overview of the use (and misuse) of power from a practical, and at times clinical, perspective.

Churches suffer a unique vulnerability to the abuse of power due to their function in mediating spiritual experience. Langberg provides a metric for an exploration of the power differentials that enable this vulnerability, while also demonstrating how members of a religious system might be complicit in the abuse of power, even if they are not the primary perpetrator. Some examples are:

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<sup>201</sup> DeGroat references post-denominational churches that do not require a Master of Divinity to be completed within the denominational seminary nor a long, structured post graduate apprenticeship process.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>203</sup> Langberg, 3-45.



**1. Insecure Complicity.**

Triggered by a sense of crisis, here members are predisposed toward reduced scrutiny of leaders, systems, and activities than they otherwise would be if not experiencing a sense of desperation.

**2. Informed Complicity.**

This occurs when a group of leaders derive personal benefit from their place in the organization (e.g.: increased influence, social standing, financial gain, or other privileges) and would face the potential loss of these benefits if they confronted abuse.

**3. Partnering Complicity.**

Whenever the activities of the church, ministry or denomination is referred to in terms of divine mission, followers (including those without power) are more likely to develop an idealistic loyalty to the organization, resulting in a willful blindness toward misconduct and a propensity to attack those perceived as threats (regardless of merit). By attacking, isolating, and discrediting would-be “threats”, members feel they are preserving something uniquely special that God has created, and they are a part of.

**4. Passive Complicity.**

When the broader spiritual community perceives that they might experience personal emotional discomfort if their institution is exposed (perhaps in the form of guilt, a crisis of belief, or loss of purpose), they are more likely to choose a willful denial that leads them toward a passive response, even in the face of significant evidence.

**5. Spiritualized Complicity.**

Thinking of the reputation of Christ, and how tarnished it would be if unfavourable revelations were to come to light, members of the Christian faithful may be willing to ignore credible allegations in order to cover, minimize, or even deny what they suspect to be true. These acts may be esteemed as a form of godliness that is protecting the

church and ensuring that the mission of God might continue unimpeded.<sup>204</sup>

The identification of these complicity motivators are especially relevant in light of the need to explore the theme of passivity. Additionally, the comfort of cognitive dissonance that each motivator appeals to leads one to consider that allegations of power abuse between clergy might be more likely to be dismissed than if similar allegations of abuse were brought forward by a congregant (due to exacerbation by the power dynamics within inter-clergy relationships).

Of further importance to this study are the clinical insights offered on the symptoms common in persons who have endured power abuse in the church. As the most common outcomes, Langberg describes shattered relationships, experiences of isolation and marginalization, a sense of fear and shame, a loss of dignity and trust, the development of spiritual numbness, and symptoms of anxiety when engaging faith.<sup>205</sup> Notably, these outcomes are not commonly associated with entitled employees, or those whose feelings are merely hurt through genuine misunderstandings. And while spiritual abuse is deeply traumatic, it is significantly exacerbated by experiences of indifference:

Having been abused by someone in the system, they ran to the shepherds. Those shepherds ignored, silenced, rejected, and blamed them. The abuse of the “Christian” system multiplies exponentially the damage done by a single perpetrator.<sup>206</sup>

Langberg’s analysis of the systems and patterns present within broad research samples provides a practical frame for the locating the experiences of this study’s participants.

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 79-84, 132-133.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 147.

## D. Blodgett: Lives Entrusted

Barbara Blodgett's *Lives Entrusted: An Ethic of Trust for Ministry* demonstrates its relevance to this project by offering a rich study on trust and Christian ethics as a backdrop for understanding the relationships between clergy. For Blodgett, trust must be conceived as a verb (as opposed to a noun), and thus the act of trust is the foundational transaction in the formation of relationships.<sup>207</sup> The positive choice to trust is central to the capacity for relational health, both individually and institutionally. Blodgett asserts that "trust always involves risk, vulnerability, and power",<sup>208</sup> and thus it must be negotiated within an informed ethical framework.

Of particular relevance to this study are Blodgett's insights on the nature and impact of lying within a relationship of trust. Citing Immanuel Kant, she argues that "physical coercion treats someone's person as a tool; lying treats someone's reason as a tool",<sup>209</sup> and thus lying is an exploitation of the relationship which constitutes a form of interpersonal violence.<sup>210</sup> Within the Christian moral code (of which clergy are obligated to participate) bold lies and active deceptions are rarely tolerated. After all, telling overt lies is an undeniable violation of God's command, and for clergy (more than most), being caught doing so carries the risk of consequence.<sup>211</sup> But what of more subtly deceptive speech? Blodgett asserts that a different form of lying is not only exceptionally common among clergy, but dynamically associated with clergy who hold higher levels of institutional power:

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<sup>207</sup> Blodgett, 2, 9-10.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>209</sup> Kant, 229; as cited by Blodgett, 135.

<sup>210</sup> Blodgett, 134.

<sup>211</sup> For brevity's sake, a complete discussion of Blodgett's approach to the morality of overt lies is not given here. It is important to note that her dialogue on the subject goes well beyond overly simplified axioms and takes into account ethical dilemmas that might make lying more moral in certain circumstances, such as the preservation of life in the face of criminal violence. This truncated summation is, however, faithful to her conclusion within the context of this literary review.

There are false statements that are not necessarily factually untrue but nevertheless have the effect of steering the hearer away from the truth. There are things people say without the conscious intention of deceiving others, but with so little concern for veracity that the truth often ends up being misrepresented anyway... there are utterances meant to persuade, convince, impress, or placate the listener, in which the end becomes more important than the means. While the end may not be [overt] deception, neither is truthfulness. We could put here the growing phenomenon of "spin," to which we are all increasingly subjected. I would argue that these various categories of speech (all these variants on the lie) are as worthy of our moral attention as lying, if only because they are so prevalent.<sup>212</sup>

Blodgett refers to this type of talk as "bullshit", and further notes that it is the primal temptation of empowered clergy: "Defined in contrast to liars, bullshitters do not care one way or the other about the truth and deceive their listeners by pretending to be sincere and authentic."<sup>213</sup>

In other words, persons in position of spiritual authority may pride themselves on their technical truthfulness, all the while breaching trust via their attempts to "persuade, convince, impress, or placate," which ultimately cause comparable relational damage to the telling of overt lies. Blodgett would argue that these acts of "bullshitting" represent an important point of moral culpability.

Because trusters are always put in some position of vulnerability vis-a-vis the people they entrust, the trust relationship always involves a differential of power.<sup>214</sup>

Blodgett asserts that verbalizing the capacity for harm in a trust relationship is a foundational practice in the formation of healthier systems. Within institutions where "bullshit" has disenfranchised members, this verbalization is especially necessary for the work of healing and restoration. Incorporating Onora O'Neill's framework of interpersonal accountability,<sup>215</sup> an application

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<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>215</sup> *A Question of Trust*, Cambridge, 2002.

of Blodgett's framework within the ecclesial context begins with requiring members of the clergy to actively disclose the power differentials present in their relationships, and in doing so, to invite those over whom they hold power to judge their actions accordingly.<sup>216</sup>

## 5. Special Mention: Power for God's Sake

Paul Beasley-Murray's *Power for God's Sake* deserves special mention as the singular work of empirical research that explores the specificity of inter-clergy relationships within the larger dynamics of ecclesial power.<sup>217</sup> Thus his work provides a valuable introduction to a wide range of scholars on the subject of power, including psychologists,<sup>218</sup> theologians,<sup>219</sup> sociologists,<sup>220</sup> and spiritual directors;<sup>221</sup> due to this interdisciplinarity, Beasley-Murray fosters an opportunity for a comprehensive critique of inter-clergy power dynamics that are especially relevant to this study.

*Power for God's Sake* frames its commentary on power and abuse in the local church within a robust exploration of the theology of power, and from there concludes that central to the problem of abuse lies a failure to identify certain uses of power as coercive or manipulative, with further failure to respond appropriately. Reflecting on his data, compiled via ministerial and congregational surveys, Beasley-Murray provides helpful insights into the question of why the abuse of power occurs and what type of action may be most appropriate to remedy such occurrences.

While the survey data demonstrates shared perceptions among ministers and congregants that clergy are indeed accountable for their use of

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<sup>216</sup> Blodgett, 26.

<sup>217</sup> While a great deal of Beasley-Murray's work is concerned with the use of power between clergy and congregant, he both broadly and specifically includes data on inter-clergy relations (64) as well as the presence and absence of accountability structures (57).

<sup>218</sup> Of note, Patricia Foque, Adolf Guggenbuehl-Craig and Rollo May.

<sup>219</sup> Insights from the likes of James Newton Poling, Martin Hengel, Cheryl Forbes, Anthony Bash and Walter Wink add depth and context to Beasley-Murray's analysis of the data.

<sup>220</sup> In particular, the insights of Larry C. Ingram and Bruce D. Reed.

<sup>221</sup> Beasley-Murray's exploration of Richard Foster and Henri Nouwen's reflections on power are significant in their own right, and provide a helpful inflection point in the dialogue of the spirituality of power.

power on some level,<sup>222</sup> ancillary inquiries into the systems of accountability established within institutions were determined to provide the best indicator of the potentiality for abuse of power.<sup>223</sup> While an audit of an organization's power safeguards will include the review of documented systems, structures, job descriptions, and review processes,<sup>224</sup> the inquiry ought not be limited to published procedures or written guidelines as these are noted to have a limited effect within systems that are philosophically informed by a perspective on spiritual leadership which conflates the exercise of power by clergy with the exercise of power by God.<sup>225</sup> To that end, Beasley-Murray sadly concludes that, "generally speaking, accountability appears to be a myth."<sup>226</sup> Practically speaking, such systems effectively preclude any meaningful accountability for misuse of power by creating a culture where abuse can actually occur within the rules of the system. As example, Beasley-Murray cites a popular seminary resource by Roy Oswald, C. Peter Wagner, and Calvin Miller:

In his introduction to a seminary textbook, Calvin Miller declares: 'If God has called you to lead, do so! All leadership is strong. Weak leadership is no leadership... Lead with power or do not call yourself a leader.' Miller then goes on throughout his book to speak of 'power leadership' and 'power leaders'. Unfortunately such statements, unqualified, can be misleading. They can easily encourage the abuse of power."<sup>227</sup>

This observation is poignant and particularly relevant to this study. Whenever an underdeveloped theology of power is present, the likelihood leaders will never be held accountable for misuse of power is significant. As such, Beasley-Murray observes that inappropriate expressions of power, such

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<sup>222</sup> Ibid.; The survey showed that 75% of clergy and 90% of congregations believed that clergy were held accountable by either groups or individuals.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., 56-57.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., 150.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid., 168-169.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid., 73; The citations attributed to Calvin Miller are from *The Empowered Leader*, Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995.

as acts of coercion and manipulation, may continue to be perpetuated despite “even the most sincere and honest self-examination”;<sup>228</sup> human frailty is no match for unhealthy cultural norms and theological poverty.

Beasley-Murray arrives at a prescriptive response that can be summarized as the need for a commitment, within institutions, to define Christian leadership across all levels, as “power exercised in trust”,<sup>229</sup> with performance evaluations centered on qualities of gentleness, self-control, truthfulness, and selflessness, not merely church growth, financial reports, and the like.<sup>230</sup>

True Christian leadership always enhances the life of others, whereas the abuse of power always leads to the destruction of others. True Christian leadership refuses to use others - whether they be individuals or churches - as stepping stones... Important as are such things as competence and ability, even more important is love and sacrifice.<sup>231</sup>

While emphasizing the enormous potential embedded in a praxis that is theologically congruent with this ethos, Beasley-Murray also presents a warning, that the improper use of power has an equally unlimited capacity to undermine gospel work, even if the institution is otherwise entirely faithful to the Christian mission.<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> Tournier, 137, as cited by Beasley-Murray, 127.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid., 138, 155.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid., 141

# Chapter 4: Theological Response

## 1. Chapter Overview

As noted, the evidence presented in chapter two is overwhelmingly indicative that the PAOC's concerns regarding abuse of power between clergy are not only well placed, but potentially underestimated. Likewise, in light of the literature's contribution to the dialogue, it seems doubtful that the anthropological framework within the formal theology of the PAOC (as identified in chapter one) is adequate to support the formation of a comprehensive response to issues of power abuse. However, before offering practical suggestions to remediate these deficits, (this will be the focus of chapter five), a theological analysis must take place. Exercises in practical theology (such as this study) seek to instigate renewed praxis; in part, because the present praxis (what the Four Voices call the operant theology) is revealed to be inadequate. Precisely because practical theology "will take seriously the concerns, perceptions, and expressions... [of] the people themselves",<sup>233</sup> theological inquiry must precede recommended action so that a cycle of unreflective pragmatism does not escalate the problem it seeks to solve. Rather, "theological normativity is located in Scripture and can challenge and modify the values embedded in the [present] theological praxis".<sup>234</sup>

Accordingly, this chapter attempts to engage the voice of normative theology as a way of critiquing, responding, and in some cases, "breaking through" espoused and operant modalities that passively preclude meaningful change. As noted in chapter one, the operant voice of theology is present in the actions of the faith community; this chapter will undertake an analysis of the theological presuppositions observed within those actions in two sections, "Rightly Bearing God's Name" and "Imago Dei", before responding to the espoused theology of the PAOC (the voice of the

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<sup>233</sup> Cartledge, 29.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.



institution) in a critique of Gene Edwards' book, *A Tale of Three Kings*. Finally, a renewed praxis, faithful to the theological discourse of this chapter, is presented as an alternative to the wholly pragmatic model observed in the data.

## 2. Rightly Bearing God's Name

An assumption of what constitutes morality is integrated into both the formal and espoused voices of the PAOC. The standards for clergy conduct include the specific priority of leading other Christians through a faithful and holy example,<sup>235</sup> and thus clergy are called to be the "first-followers" of Christ as they discharge their duties.<sup>236</sup> Historically, Pentecostals have embraced this view of clergy, developing detailed written prescriptions related to their personal holiness standards;<sup>237</sup> yet Carmen Imes presents a challenge to the status quo in in this regard, via a fresh exegesis of Exodus 20:7 and the Sinai discourse as a whole, in *Bearing God's Name*.

Arguing that the western church has had an anemic understanding of what it means to "take the Lord's name in vain,"<sup>238</sup> Imes posits that the absence of a contextual hermeneutic surrounding the decalogue has broadly led many denominations to miss the gravity and substance of the second commandment (which absolutely insists on the right and ethical treatment of all human beings),<sup>239</sup> while cultivating a hyper-fixation on rules for speech as a demonstration of godliness.<sup>240</sup> In this light, she offers a new translation of the passage that is especially useful for understanding the connection between this commandment and the development of a biblical and theological ethic of power:

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<sup>235</sup> Cf. PAOC, "By-Law 10"; PAOC, "Ministerial Code of Ethics"; Trask et al., 106.

<sup>236</sup> Russell, "Choosing God's Call"

<sup>237</sup> Cf. Trask et al., 105-117; Synan, 2-3.

<sup>238</sup> Exod 20:7.

<sup>239</sup> Imes, 40-43; While aware of differences in numbering the ten commandments across Christian tradition, Imes argues, "Do not take the Lord's name in vain," is the second commandment based in part on the grammatical structure of the passage (45-48).

<sup>240</sup> Imes, 48-51.

You must not bear (or carry) the name of Yahweh, your God, in vain, for Yahweh will not hold guiltless one who bears (or carries) his name in vain.<sup>241</sup>

It is the significance of the “bearing” (or carrying) language that shifts the interpretation toward a poignant consideration of personal ethics. Imes points out that the peculiar language in this text is a direct reference to priestly vestments, both the medallion Aaron “bears” (or carries) on his turban (inscribed *qodesh layahweh* which means “Holy, belonging to Yahweh”),<sup>242</sup> and the breastplate he wears, which bears the names of the twelve tribes. Carrying the seal of the Lord identifies the bearer as both a vassal and an official representative,<sup>243</sup> and thus requires accurate representation in words and action. Thus, when the command is given to all of Israel (not merely the priestly class), it must be understood as an ethical imperative given to a “kingdom of priests” who bear the name of the Lord in each moment of their ordinary lives.<sup>244</sup>

At Sinai, Yahweh claims this nation as his very own and releases them to live out their calling. That calling is to bear Yahweh’s name among the nations, that is, **to represent him well...** To bear his name in vain would be to enter into this covenant relationship with him but to live no differently than the surrounding pagans.<sup>245</sup>

In reference to the Four Voices, Exodus 20:7 is effectively a warning to the representatives of Yahweh to be careful that their operant theology is truthful. Considering Imes’ argument (that failing to grasp this meaning sets a very low bar, reducing the command to a limited prohibition of “cursing”,<sup>246</sup> and that this limitation enables a religious culture permissive toward the abuse of

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<sup>241</sup> Ibid.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid., 50; Cf. Greer et al., 140; Pittman, 320-327.

<sup>244</sup> Imes, 31.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid., 51, 53; Emphasis added.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., 48-49.

power in the name of divine service),<sup>247</sup> it is incumbent that the behaviours catalogued in this study are analyzed in this light.<sup>248</sup>

If “rightly bearing God’s name” is understood to mean a faithful representation of God’s character through one’s actions (especially in the exercise of spiritual power), the cumulatively alleged behaviours emerging from the narratives stand out as a catastrophic failure of holiness. One is certainly not “rightly bearing the name of God” when they are berating their staff, mandating excessive hours in violation of labour law, covering up offences, or cleverly orchestrating an ambush for a suspected violation of morality. Here, Diane Langberg’s descriptions of complicity motivators (particularly Partnering Complicity and Spiritual Complicity; although Informed Complicity deserves a special mention due to the frequency of “Passivity” in the sample) provide a psychological framework for understanding the dissonance between these actions and the base Christian morality that ought to easily preclude their commission.<sup>249</sup>

Precisely because the PAOC sees its mission as particularly urgent,<sup>250</sup> the tolerance for abusive behaviour within the network of clergy is increased (there is an expectation that ministers will put the “mission” first). This view presumes a level of acceptable sacrifice and hardship for ministers, even if such hardship is inflicted by a fellow member of the clergy. The need for a more robust formal theological voice becomes especially apparent within this context; without an adequate theological anthropology, the age-old question of whether the end justifies the means is likely to be answered overwhelmingly in the affirmative. When this is the case, a confession of sin can be effectively disguised as the burden of leadership:

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<sup>247</sup> Imes, 49-53.

<sup>248</sup> This makes no particular comparison between contemporary clergy and the cultic priests of the Old Testament, but rather appeals to the universality of the command and the responsibility of clergy as exemplars of the faith.

<sup>249</sup> Langberg, 79-84, 132-133.

<sup>250</sup> cf. Luscombe, “Reclaiming a Sense of Urgency”; Wells, “Aligned for Mission.”

This was a really hard decision, and we are grieved that people were hurt and disadvantaged in the process. With that being said, we had no choice. We have a mission from God and any other course of action may have jeopardized our effectiveness.<sup>251</sup>

While ideal circumstances are rarely seen, and there is no guarantee that the faithful and ethical use of power will always result in a freedom from anguish or loss for all involved, sanctimonious appeals to realism must not be held up as an excuse for a failure to integrate such a foundational ethic. To “rightly bear God’s name” is to pursue the will of the Lord in a manner that is consistent with the way of the Lord; an ethic of power marked by cruciformity, love, and moral integrity.

### **3. Imago Dei**

Moving toward a more comprehensive theological anthropology is thus an essential part of developing the renewed praxis. This section will explore how excessive workloads and marginalizing behaviours can be critiqued and reformed through theological reflection. While continuing with the Sinai motif, consideration will then be given to the New Testament case against a spiritual justification for disregarding another’s welfare, before articulating an anthropologically informed ethic of power in the final subsection.

The basis of this reflection is rooted in a continuation of Imes’ exploration of the Sinai covenant and its anthropological implications. While acknowledging the limitedness of the PAOC’s formal doctrine of humanity, the foundational premise that underlies this analysis is nonetheless intact:

Formed in the image of God, both male and female, humankind is entrusted with the care of God’s creation as faithful stewards.<sup>252</sup>

This belief, that human beings are formed in the image of God, sets an expectation over both how they will behave and of how they must also be

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<sup>251</sup> Paraphrased to protect the identity of the source.

<sup>252</sup> SOET, 2: “Creation”.

treated. Such an assertion is a sharp contrast to the other ethical codes at work in the ancient world in the time of the Old Testament.

The involvement of the entirety of Israel in the covenant with God,<sup>253</sup> the broad scope of the law they then received,<sup>254</sup> and the direction in which this law “points”,<sup>255</sup> all indicate that the biblical ethic is uniquely permeated by an anthropocentricity unseen in the wider ancient world.<sup>256</sup>

Daniel Block calls the Ten Commandments a “bill of rights.” However, unlike the Bill of Rights in the US Constitution, Block points out that these ten do not focus on a person’s own rights but the rights of one’s neighbor. The job of every Israelite is to protect other people’s freedoms. And it’s done by keeping the Ten Words.<sup>257</sup>

Seeing the decalogue as the “Bill of Other People’s Rights,”<sup>258</sup> involves each recipient of the law recognizing the power that they possess. Both corporately and individually, the power to obey or disobey is inherent to the Sinai discourse, and the objective of “Ten Words”<sup>259</sup> is to direct human power toward the blessing and care of others. As such, a biblical theology of power emerges in this moment that emphasizes a sense of solemn responsibility: the covenant is for everyone, and thus everyone (with whatever degree of agency they possess), is called to exercise their power in a way that protects the well-being of others. The corollary is equally true, and the use of power to harm or disadvantage, is universally prohibited.<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>253</sup> As opposed to merely kings or priests.

<sup>254</sup> Specifically, ethics that cover all aspects of ordinary life, not just national or ceremonial duties.

<sup>255</sup> That is, the concern for the basic rights of all people, not merely a kingly or priestly class.

<sup>256</sup> Imes, 61-64; Provan et al., 134; Brueggemann, 566.

<sup>257</sup> Imes, 53.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

<sup>260</sup> As alluded to by both Imes and Provan, it is not merely the universality of the commandments that is unique to Israel, but the provision of justice available without regard for social class, a general anomaly in the ancient world. This is thoroughly discussed by Hans Boecker in *Law and the Administration of Justice* (53-65).

## A. Honour the Sabbath

In this light, the reported impact to health, family and spiritual vitality among clergy who were manipulated or coerced into overwork must be taken very seriously. Variances in working week norms between the Biblical era and the present can hardly account for the gross differential between the average Canadian work week (36.9 hours),<sup>261</sup> and the hours reported by those in the sample group (particularly when one considers the excess with which clergy hours exceed provincial maximums, and the inequity present in refusing the associated overtime pay legally required).<sup>262</sup> Considering the geographic variance of these experiences, it appears likely unhealthy labour norms are deeply enculturated within the PAOC.

Some evidence of this is found within the “Customizable Personnel Manual for Church Administration”,<sup>263</sup> a 2016 document provided as a national administrative resource on the PAOC website. This template includes a workload model for “Pastoral Support Staff” that includes expectations of three evenings per week of ministry (at three hours per evening), availability on Saturdays as required, and entirely open-ended hours on Sundays.<sup>264</sup> It further states that:

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<sup>261</sup> Statistics Canada, “Standard Work Week”; Notwithstanding the argument that contemporary workers labour for many more hours per year than their pre-modern counterparts (Riis, “Analysis of Working Hours”), the contextual issue Sabbath presents, at least according to Imes, is one of equity and wellbeing (53-54); the reality of social norms (e.g.: rest required from normative responsibilities) impacts both.

<sup>262</sup> The prominence and frequency of labour complaints within the sample, especially untenable and exploitive work hours, is significant and includes workweeks that reached the 70-85 hour range, with responsibilities regularly invading a singular day off. These experiences, which also included required unpaid work, are gross violations of employment standards across all jurisdictions, which, on average, legally require overtime pay beyond 44 hours per week (Cf. Indeed for Employers, “Ontario Overtime Pay vs Other Provinces in Canada”).

<sup>263</sup> Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, “Personnel Policies (Template)”.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

Due to the professional nature of Pastoring, hours extra prior or following set times shall be considered ministry / gratis. A general rule of hours for work and ministry will be 50 hours / week.

One (1) day off a week, Monday to Friday, to be set by / with the Lead Pastor and Administrator.<sup>265</sup>

The statement that extra hours shall be considered “ministry / gratis” means that additional time (even beyond the 50-hour model) is uncompensated and expected as a “gift” from this member of the clergy to their church. Needless to say, such employment conditions are a violation of employment standards in every Canadian jurisdiction,<sup>266</sup> and attempts to justify these types of conditions via a spiritualization of the particular work, (e.g.: “...but ministry work is service for the Lord!”) should be rejected as an indicators of deep theological poverty.<sup>267</sup>

Returning to the Sinai discourse, it becomes quickly evident that the current praxis was formed either in ignorance or disobedience to the commandment of sabbath,<sup>268</sup> and thus a correction is required.

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns.<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>265</sup> Ibid.

<sup>266</sup> For further discussion on the claim that clergy are exempt from the protection of employment standards legislation, refer to chapter 2 § 4(A).

<sup>267</sup> Namely due to the utter callousness that his perspective maintains, ignoring the devastating effect on the wellbeing of the clergy (and their families) upon whom these conditions are imposed.

<sup>268</sup> Exod 20:8.

<sup>269</sup> Exod 20:8-10, NIV; Conceivably, one might make the argument that Israel’s six-day work week nullifies any complaints made within the five-day work week common to the contemporary western world, Thomas Riis provides a throughout analysis of data that indicates cultures with six-day work weeks had much shorter workdays, and cumulatively required far less labour-hours per year on the average (“Analysis of Working Hours”). Accordingly, excessive hours (in Canada, those that go well beyond legal maximums) ought to be reasonably considered as a breach of sabbath, whether or not the imposition is structured around a singular (24 hour) “day off”. As Imes’ demonstrates, the principle within the command is equity and wellbeing, neither of which are present in clergy overwork.

Implied in this command is the assumption that some individuals, by virtue of their role or status, will have the power to influence and control the work requirements of their subordinates. While political and cultural hierarchies in the ancient near east provided kings and masters with the privilege of rest and leisure, their subordinates and those in the lowest classes were often afforded only limited reprieve; not so under the rule of Yahweh. Building on her interpretive framework, Imes' asserts that this command is intended to ensure that:

... it's not just the master of the house who gets a day of rest, while everyone else waits on him. Rather, the entire household is free to participate in this rhythm of grace... Sabbath is not simply ceasing from labor, but actually enjoying its results from the other six days.<sup>270</sup>

Sabbath recognizes God's gracious gift to all human beings: a break from labour whereby health, relationships and deep spiritual life have room to flourish. Thus, when those with authority fail to grant rest to their subordinates, they do more than exhaust them, they deface them as human beings. The overwork of image-bearers for the building of "God's Kingdom" is simply incoherent within normative biblical theology.

The application of the sabbath command is where theological anthropology intersects with a theology of power. While an individualistic reading of Exodus 20:8-11 will primarily hold each overworked member of the clergy responsible for failing to rest, a return to the "Bill of Other People's Rights"<sup>271</sup> as an interpretive framework immediately holds responsible deacon boards, lead pastors, and denominational leaders for the standards of labour they tolerate, normalize, and impose upon those who serve under their leadership.

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<sup>270</sup> Imes, 54.

<sup>271</sup> Imes, 53.



## B. Do not Bear False Witness

Contemporary disputes between clergy, as with any interpersonal conflict, continue to reflect today an underlying reality of the proto-sinaitic and exodus eras: when both party's claims of truth are incompatible, the status of each individual is likely to significantly influence the outcome. Such is demonstrated within this study, where a universally favourable outcome is recorded for those in positions of power regarding all allegations of misconduct inferred in Tables 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4.<sup>272</sup> While a statistical analysis of probability has not been undertaken, anecdotally it seems reasonable to assume it unlikely that clergy with greater positional power or social influence were factually the victims of false accusations in every case reported.

Of further interest is the frequency with which fear of retaliation was cited as a reason misconduct was not reported, along with narratives that describe the consequence of reporting mistreatment as some form of marginalization or active discreditation.<sup>273</sup> Accounts of lost friendships, abandonment by the ecclesial community, and economic hardship due to false reports of their impugned character are as raw as they are frequent within the sample. When cross-referenced with accounts of empowered clergy lying to, misleading, or (to use Blodgett's terminology) "bullshitting" the broader constituency, the Sinai discourse once again emerges as a point of significant theological reflection, particularly Exodus 20:16: "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor."

The non-anthropocentric hermeneutic (which Imes' has been so diligently dismantling) might interpret this commandment primarily as a

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<sup>272</sup> Of note, several participants noted that the PAOC takes "very seriously" allegations of financial misconduct or sexual immorality, but beyond these specific allegations, there is simply no response. Resolution 20, the amendment to add non-sexual abuses of power to the by-laws as a disqualifying moral failure, is meant to respond to this very issue.

<sup>273</sup> The phenomenon of discrediting and marginalizing those who bring grievances forward cannot be adequately explained as merely the natural inclination of an accused person to defend themselves as many cases involve the systemic marginalization of a complainant by the institution as a whole (the broader ecclesial leadership that informally punishes a minister who reports mistreatment from clergy with greater power). This is further explored in within this section as an example of institutional preservation.

prohibition against misrepresenting the facts of a particular matter; yet the object of this imperative is not a depersonalized piece of evidence, it is a human being. In absence of a normative theological anthropology, the priority of “your neighbour” is easily de-emphasized: a poorly formed theology of power centered on personal interest does not read the decalogue as the “Bill of Other People’s Rights”,<sup>274</sup> but rather as parameters for one’s personal conduct. While subtle, a grammatical focus on the subject (instead of the object) of the commandment informs an interpretive framework that focuses intently on the technical details of a behaviour instead of God’s broad intent: articulating a law that gives life.

While telling lies about inanimate facts is certainly immoral, the deep significance of bearing false witness “against your neighbor,”<sup>275</sup> is in its disfiguring of their identity. The castigation and marginalization of whistleblowers is not primarily problematic because such actions impede future employment opportunities, or even because these acts signal impunity to those who are misusing power,<sup>276</sup> but rather because these acts bear false testimony about the identity of the persons themselves. This violation is further aggravated when religious jargon is used to justify it.

The prioritization of “the church” (as institution) or “the mission” (as sacred task) over human beings themselves has become a recurring theme in these analyses; by all accounts, this represents a well-intentioned, but theologically problematic, perspective with deep roots in the PAOC.<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>274</sup> Imes, 53.

<sup>275</sup> Exod 20:16

<sup>276</sup> By “not primarily problematic” I only mean to say that while these are significant problems in their own right (which deserve earnest consideration) there exists an even greater consequence for marginalization that cannot be remediated merely by reversing these secondary impacts (e.g.: appointing to gainful employment and holding the offending party accountable).

<sup>277</sup> As context, the phrase, “what is best for the Church is best for me,” is emphasized within the PAOC “Church Administration Manual” (60), a sample document from the recently archived “Resource Documents” repository on the PAOC website. As a philosophical framework, this sample features a section meant to guide pastors, who may have been wronged or mistreated, in the process of exiting church employment. The manual admonishes clergy toward action that prioritizes the stability, reputation, and wellbeing of the local assembly, regardless of any personal harm that they may have experienced. Of course, professionally speaking, airing one’s so-called “dirty laundry” as a form of revenge or self-medication is wholly inappropriate. However the dilemma that this research highlights, is the gross absence of qualifying criteria to distinguish between personal disagreements and

Conflating the reputation of the institution with the cause of Christ itself, clergy who marginalize and discredit whistleblowers, or instigate a cover-up scheme, may be excused as, “only looking out for the best interest of the church”.<sup>278</sup> Langberg indicts this perspective as being explicitly antithetical to the normative theological voice on the matter:

People are sacred. Systems are not. They are only worth the people who are in them and the people they serve. And people are to be treated, whether one or many, the way Jesus Christ treated people.<sup>279</sup>

The engagement of Imes’ hermeneutical shift (as discussed) is thus more than merely a matter of biblical study; it represents an opportunity for the transformation of the underlying praxis evident within the current operant theology. Moving from a subject-oriented to an object-oriented reading of the Sinai discourse shifts the proof of morality in each of these situation away from debates over whether the subject of the command “technically” did or did not lie, and onto whether the object of the command had their identity disfigured. As such, this framework is generative toward an evaluative awareness reflective of Beasley-Murray’s assertion that, “true Christian leadership always enhances the life of others, whereas the abuse of power always leads to the destruction of others”,<sup>280</sup> or more colloquially, it cuts through the image of ministry “success” to examine whether or not there are

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acts of misconduct when clergy experience hurt. Evidence that subordinate clergy were expected to keep quiet or participate in cover-up schemes is found both within the research sample and in another repository template, the “Church Leadership Philosophy Manual” which specifically require staff pastors to “defend the Senior Pastor from unwarranted comments, slanderous remarks, **true or false accusations**, and any other form of gossip or malicious comments directed at him and members of his family,” (21, Emphasis added).

The balance of evidence suggests that this perspective (“what is best for the Church is best for me”) has been used to silence and discourage clergy from reasonable actions to redress serious issues (e.g.: employment law violations, discrimination, harassment, etc.). Thus, the overall impact of the “church first” philosophical framework is the de facto prioritization of institutional stability over clergy wellbeing, regardless of official intent.

A complete list of documents from the now archived repository are available here: <https://web.archive.org/web/20220707125046/https://paoc.org/ministry-toolbox/church-resource-documents/church-administration>

<sup>278</sup> Source withheld for confidentiality.

<sup>279</sup> Langberg, 87.

<sup>280</sup> Beasley-Murray, 128.

“bodies behind the bus”,<sup>281</sup> and invites an anthropocentric shift reflective of normative Christian ethics.

### C. A New Testament Critique of Spiritualized Indifference

Imes’ assertion that Exodus 20:8-17 ought to be read as an effectual “Bill of Other People’s Rights”<sup>282</sup> in order to capture the significance of God’s concern for the wellbeing of humankind finds further support in the New Testament. While much can be said about Israel’s idolatry (and her resulting exile) in the generations that followed the Sinai covenant, Rikk Watts aptly points out that in the New Testament, the historical failure of Israel to recognize and respond to the anthropocentric themes in the law emerged as a significant conflict between God (in Jesus) and the religious institution. In a cross-reference of Mark 7:9-13 with Exodus 20:12, Watts also concludes that a subject-oriented reading of the decalogue had led to the failure of religious leaders to apply the theological anthropology embedded in Torah.

At issue, then, are not the ritual purity codes per se. It is instead the hypocrisy of worship (whether involving Sabbath or purity) that **meticulously observes human regulations but hard-heartedly ignores God’s requirement for the welfare of people**, not least in circumventing [God’s] clear command concerning parents in order to protect personal interests, [which] aggressively **denies the Torah’s core orientation to glorify God by doing good and bringing life...** In the midst of an intensive conflict over the nature of holiness, his opponents’ hard heartedness on this particular point of Torah more clearly than most invokes the threat of God’s exilic censure.<sup>283</sup>

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<sup>281</sup> This metaphor is used repeatedly in the “Rise and Fall of Mars Hill” podcast series, a journalistic report on allegations of power abuse by Mark Driscoll, who used this phrase to describe his willingness to sacrifice ministry leaders to achieve the ultimate goals of his church. In episode five of the series, “The Things We Do To Women”, this term is especially poignant and is used to summarize the significant spiritual and emotional damage that was inflicted on members of that church community. Due to the reach of the podcast, “bodies behind the bus” has become a symbolic metaphor of those who were used, abused, and discarded by a Christian institution. A link to this episode is provided in the bibliography.

<sup>282</sup> Imes, 53.

<sup>283</sup> Watts, 106, 108; Emphasis added.

The text Watts refers to is the controversy revolving around the care of parents, as commanded by God at Sinai,<sup>284</sup> that emerges in chapter seven of Mark's gospel:

And [Jesus] continued, "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions! For Moses said, 'Honor your father and mother,' and, 'Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.' But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is *Corban* (that is, devoted to God)— then you no longer let them do anything for their father or mother. Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down."

Corban, in facilitating a creative loophole by which support for one's parents could be redirected for the benefit the religious institution, invoked the anger of God. As it could be personally advantageous to dedicate "to the Lord's use" resources meant for the good of one's parents, this incident serves as shorthand for the critique of prioritizing personal and religious interests over faithfulness toward the care of others.<sup>285</sup>

As Watts' notes, the issue at hand is the actual welfare of the mother and father associated to this story. To put it succinctly, Jesus' objection is that it had become religiously acceptable to disadvantage and dishonour human beings, as long as it was in done in the name of religious service; he accordingly indicts this neglect as a sin against the one in whose image humans are made.<sup>286</sup> While echoes of this sentiment within the New Testament are evident,<sup>287</sup> Jesus' alignment with an anthropocentric, object-centered reading of the decalogue is especially significant for the context of this study.

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<sup>284</sup> Exod 20:12

<sup>285</sup> In his article "Vowing Away the Fifth Commandment", Jon Bailey notes that "In an age when the Temple still stood, [Corban] may well have been used to dedicate property that would subsequently be given [to others] as an offering to God. Yet the previous evidence examined in this study suggests that the formula was also used to prohibit others from using something by declaring it consecrated as far as they were concerned," (202).

<sup>286</sup> Note Watts' specific notes regarding the Isaianic warnings implicit in Mark 7:10 (107).

<sup>287</sup> Particularly the use of Mark 12:30-31 in Jas 1:27-2:26. See also Matt 23:23-24 and Luke 10:25-37, 11:37-46.

In both the Sinaitic and first century contexts, normative theological anthropology is used as a means to calibrate (or recalibrate) base levels of tolerance for anti-human behaviour. In consideration of the prior discussions on the prioritization of religious success, the Markan discourse on Corban further emphasizes what has already been established; such priorities are misguided, and in actuality represent a spiritual anathema.

#### **D. Moving Toward Remediation**

Having established the anthropocentric focus of the theologically normative ethics emerging from Exodus 20:1-17, we now turn to the task of articulating a renewed framework for the use of power within ecclesial leadership. This requires a challenge to the model of power observed within the common experiences of the sample group. As noted, the model of power observed as the operant theology in the PAOC is one where power is primarily exercised in the service of one's own agenda. While a benevolent expression of this model is no doubt pursued with great intentionality, perhaps in seeking to sanctify one's interests, the susceptibility to inappropriately conflating one's agenda with the will of God remains too real. At its worst, this model of power quickly gives way to exploitation, where others are "used" as a means to an end. This is visible within the data in multiple forms; while the vast majority of power abuse identified within the sample appears to be opportunistic, this does not diminish the devastating impact to the target. To this end, it reveals the sobering reality that "unholy power models are systems that can only produce the unholy of the dark lord who stands behind them".<sup>288</sup> The model itself must be overhauled; a renewed praxis must be the goal.

Borrowing from the formal voice of the literature, this task of renewal begins with a declaration that all human power is entrusted power, originating from God, given for the service of others.<sup>289</sup> A truly Christian

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<sup>288</sup> Sykes, 13.

<sup>289</sup> Sykes, 27.

model of power affirms that the agency gifted to humanity is inextricably tied to the human vocation, with accountability embedded therein. Here, the formal voice of the PAOC can be amended:

... humankind is entrusted with **power for the purpose of the care of God’s creation, especially other human beings who are both the subject and object of His care in their calling as faithful stewards.**<sup>290</sup>

Here, holiness is not an abstract concept; rather it is relating rightly to God, humanity, creation and ourselves.<sup>291</sup> “Relating rightly” is thus the formative framework that serves to engage a Christian vision for renewed interpersonal ethics, especially in the light of power differentials. In his 2014 work, *Seriously Dangerous Religion*,<sup>292</sup> Iain Provan articulates this praxis in action as he describes a biblical and theological ethic for human relationships:

... the God who will not be treated as an object also demands that human beings not treat their neighbors in this way. The God who insists on being addressed as “Thou” rather than “It” also insists that mortal beings should not disregard their neighbor’s personhood. The God who will not allow mortal beings to use him for their own purposes also sets limits on the human tendency to use others... [and commands] the rejection of neighbor destroying and the embrace of neighbor keeping activities.<sup>293</sup>

The conviction that these two theological axes are inextricably connected provides a framework for the regulation of the exercise of power along a very particular morality; it engages self-deceptive religion by exposing interpersonal violence as abhorrent, regardless of whatever false piety attempts to disguise it.

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<sup>290</sup> Modified from SOET; author’s addition indicated by emphasis.

<sup>291</sup> This particular way of articulating holiness is helpful as each of these require a theologically informed model of power and the Christian vocation in order to be successful.

<sup>292</sup> Baker Publishing, 2014.

<sup>293</sup> Provan., 206-207; Provan’s argument (that the proper treatment of men and women, and thus the right use of power is actually a reflection of a one’s right relationship with God) provides an important waypoint for an ongoing critique of theological modalities that might seek to re-imagine Christian faithfulness in a more abstract form.

From this vantage point, a practical metric emerges: any praxis which produces experiences of indifference, inequality, and indignity in human beings must be indicted as definitively un-Christian, and subsequently deconstructed.<sup>294</sup> Likewise this praxis positively re-supposes ministerial work as the sacred trust of leading those whom God loves: human persons who bear his very image.

#### **4. Submission and Abuse**

Throughout the interviews with current and former clergy, the theme of “spiritual submission” was an accompanying presence, especially in its impact on perceptions of leadership, boundaries, grievances, and the ability to leave a toxic situation. While it cannot be overstated how significantly this dynamic affected the participants within the sample,<sup>295</sup> a specific aspect of the submission theme which warrants examination are the references to Gene Edwards’ 1992 allegory *A Tale of Three Kings*. Whether a direct reference to the title, a literary allusion (for example, phrases such as “be a David to your Saul”,<sup>296</sup> or “he’s still God’s anointed”<sup>297</sup>), or the experience of receiving a copy of the book from another leader, the data is indicative of a wide familiarity with Edwards’ work.<sup>298</sup>

The popularity of this book and the surrounding folklore about the importance of submission to spiritual authority (at all costs and at all times) represents a touchstone issue for the PAOC. As such, an examination of this work of historical fiction represents an opportunity to examine the espoused theological voice of the movement in regard to power, submission, and appropriate response.

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<sup>294</sup> The use of the categories from chapter two is intentional, as this provides a greater degree evaluative clarity than more general terminology.

<sup>295</sup> An incapacitory effect was noted multiple times as clergy stayed in situations that were clearly unhealthy for extended durations of time. See Joseph’s story (Chapter 2 § 3(A.5).

<sup>296</sup> Interview transcript, S3P1.

<sup>297</sup> Interview transcript, S1P2.

<sup>298</sup> Notably, Edwards’ work bears a striking resemblance to the tone of the replies which participants personally received from denominational leaders upon reporting mistreatment.



## A. A Misappropriated Story

Subtitled as “a study in brokenness”, *A Tale of Three Kings* dramatizes the portion of King David’s biography that intersects with Saul and Absalom. Presented as an Old Testament guide to leadership, the book is comprised of twenty-three short chapters, and is as accessible as it is brief. Recommended as a sort of “survival guide” for young pastors who find themselves employed by a difficult lead pastor, Edwards makes no fewer than twenty references to Saul as “the Lord’s anointed” and openly suggests that only God knows if a spear-throwing leader (such as the mad King Saul) may yet still be God’s chosen one. Thus, he advises young leaders to diligently dodge the missiles, and above all, keep quiet, as this sample captures:

Unlike anyone else in spear-throwing history, David did not know what to do when a spear was thrown at him. He did not throw Saul’s spears back at him. Nor did he make any spears of his own and throw them. Something was different about David. All he did was dodge. What can a man, especially a young man, do when the king decides to use him for target practice? What if the young man decides not to return the compliment?

First of all, he must pretend he cannot see spears. Even when they are coming straight at him. Secondly, he must also learn to duck very quickly. Lastly, he must pretend nothing at all happened.

You can easily tell when someone has been hit by a spear. He turns a deep shade of bitter. David never got hit. Gradually, he learned a very well kept secret. He discovered three things that prevented him from ever being hit.

One, never learn anything about the fashionable, easily-mastered art of spear throwing.

Two, stay out of the company of all spear throwers.

And three, keep your mouth tightly closed.

In this way, spears will never touch you, even when they pierce your heart.<sup>299</sup>

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<sup>299</sup> Edwards, 22.

Strikingly, Edwards' admonishment in this chapter is exactly the espoused theology of senior PAOC leaders on the abuse of ministers: subordinate clergy must endure attack as a form of spiritual faithfulness, they must be continuously unarmed and vulnerable, and in particular they must keep their mouths "tightly closed" concerning the abuse they see and endure.<sup>300</sup> The present task is to evaluate this work as a normative model; is the framework that Edwards has provided suitable for responding to clergy conflict within the context of power differentials?

## **B. Critiquing the Espoused Voice**

While the dramatized account of David and Saul's interactions are intriguing, they are nonetheless inappropriate for use as a prescriptive model. Developing a normative theology based on an analogous reading of David's experiences in 1 Samuel 19:8-10 poses a significant risk for the reader. Further, by casting Saul as a potentially normative spiritual leader, and frequently citing his credentials as "the Lord's anointed",<sup>301</sup> Edwards' potentially legitimizes leadership behaviour that is blatantly condemned in both the Torah (a clear violation of the "Bill of Other People's Rights" by one with power and authority),<sup>302</sup> and the New Testament, which clearly affirms the anthropological priority of the Sinaitic code before articulating even higher standards for those who lead in the church.<sup>303</sup> To espouse *A Tale of Three Kings* as normative theology, a template to be used by clergy facing mistreatment is thus entirely inappropriate, as is the associated marginalization of clergy who break from this model and stand-up to their tyrants.

The level at which Edwards' work resonates within the sample group ought to give rise to a serious pause: there are spear-throwing "Saul's" among

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<sup>300</sup> Ibid.

<sup>301</sup> Within 1 Samuel it is worth noting that while David refers to Saul as "the Lord's anointed," this perspective is never explicitly endorsed by God; further, the account in Edwards' book takes place after Saul is explicitly rejected as Israel's legitimate king (1 Samuel 15:26).

<sup>302</sup> Imes, 53; Exod 20:13.

<sup>303</sup> Matt 5:43-45; Col 3:8; 1 Tim 3:1-7.

PAOC clergy, but rather than identify and discipline them, those in positions of trust have opted to burden their victims with the responsibility of “learning a lesson” from such abuse. While the “spears” documented in this research vary from denigrating comments (in particular, racial or sexist remarks) to outright threats, the consistency with which the victims of such attacks report passivity by senior leadership further demonstrate the widespread acceptance of Edwards’ model.<sup>304</sup> Notwithstanding the continued popularity of Edwards’ book,<sup>305</sup> its message likewise finds itself at odds with the serious scholarly work of both DeGroat and Mullen (reviewed in the previous chapter).

Beyond the potential of both legal consequence and further impacts to long-term sustainability, Diane Langberg articulates the spiritual cost of continuing along the present course:

[In speaking out about abuse], the youth pastor “disobeyed” those God had put over him... voices were silenced. Power was abused in order to accomplish that... To treat any human, a person created in God’s image, as less than human is destructive to their personhood, their identity. The God who called the Word intends for those create in his image to have a voice. He created us to speak. He does not want that voice silenced or crushed.<sup>306</sup>

In absence of support from both the formal and normative theological voices, one must ask, what led to the uncritical adoption of such an unqualified resource? As this model for the management of power abuse is clearly inadequate, the development of a responsive praxis is urgent. In the aftermath of decades of encouragement for wounded clergy to follow the “steps” within Edwards’ book (dodge and run, don’t strike back,<sup>307</sup> and above

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<sup>304</sup> As noted, in multiple accounts passivity is combined with an appeal to participate in a cover-up scheme for sake of reputation management, an act aligned with Edwards’ prescription that quite literally adds insult to injury.

<sup>305</sup> GoodReads reports that *A Tale of Three Kings* maintains a 4.28 out of 5 stars in its Community Rating section as of August 2023.

<sup>306</sup> Langberg, 136.

<sup>307</sup> A particular disdain for outside intervention is widely noted in the sample. On more than one occasion, district superintendents are reported to have told credentialed clergy that if they took legal action they would “never pastor in the PAOC again”; an overt threat of marginalization.

all, stay silent), both clergy and laity would do well to remember that those who throw spears are not shepherds, but hunters.

## 5. The Renewed Praxis

Praxis, “the ways in which beliefs and values are enacted and embodied,”<sup>308</sup> is renewed through a process of intentional reflection that roots itself as equally in the ordinary world of decisions, constraints, and unpredictability as it does in the theories, data, and theology of the academy. Returning to the language of the Four Voices, a renewed praxis emerges when the authoritative voice of normative theology effectively transforms the active voice of operant theology. Of course, this is not a linear act that can simply be mapped out, but rather a process that involves a dialogue between all of the voices: the normative is both accessed, and obstructed, by the established voices of formal and espoused theology within a community, including their critique (or embrace) of the operant voice, as it is, in the present.<sup>309</sup> The “real world” of the operant plays a crucial role in this process, grounding reflection and imagination in practice, while also offering itself up to the other voices for transformation. Of course, values embodied must also be articulated, so as a renewed praxis emerges, a transformation of regular ecclesial language (the espoused voice) should also result. Here, the aim is to engage praxis as a “reflective engagement in history that transforms the world”,<sup>310</sup> a push back on the kind of operant theology that is formed haphazardly as a reaction to circumstance.

The current praxis at work in the PAOC is best described as a form of unreflective pragmatism: action, reactions, and entire systems oriented toward the most expedient achievement of a practical end. By virtue of both its history and unique distinctives, the Pentecostal movement has generally held the mission of evangelism, and the experience of revival, to be the “end”

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<sup>308</sup>Cartledge, 118.

<sup>309</sup> The interaction between the voices engages a kind of epistemological spiral, drawing closer and closer to a faithful articulation of the normative through each pass of reflection and critique.

<sup>310</sup> Johns, 37, as cited by Cartledge, 46.

upon which efforts are focused.<sup>311</sup> Yet in the absence of serious and sustained anthropological reflection, the pursuit of this end has wrought significant collateral damage.<sup>312</sup> While the priority of gospel proclamation, and transformation by the Holy Spirit, is faithfully rooted in an appropriate respect for the New Testament narrative, the means of this pursuit varies. Over time, the resources deemed most efficient (and indeed, essential) to the mission have been informally sacralised, making their preservation a primal priority. The assets (such as buildings, trusts, and currency), reputation (of churches, ministers, and the denomination), methods (such as leadership styles, ministry models, and training systems), structures (governance model, by-laws, formal and informal hierarchies) and values (holiness distinctives, theological emphasis, cultural norms) of the PAOC are perceived with varying degrees of indispensability for the cause. Inevitably, the efficient pursuit of mission has, at times, become so deeply conflated with the preservation of these resources, that in a conflict of ethics where addressing the injustice of power abuse might result in reputational damage (or perhaps caring for a member of the clergy might involve revisiting a contested holiness distinctive), the missional resources always come first. Unreflective pragmatism leads to the violation of human beings, in part because efficiency, by definition, takes no consideration of ethics; only cost.<sup>313</sup>

An honest admission of this reality is not only painful, it risks producing an epistemological crisis for its members. As reports of abuse, neglect and misconduct are received, the consideration that these experiences are features (not bugs) of an unhealthy system may cast doubt around the legitimacy of the mission and efforts of the organization on the whole. As Langberg notes, religious communities may thus have any number or reasons to engage in a form of cognitive dissonance regarding institutional shortcomings; the threat

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<sup>311</sup> While this point is well established throughout this study, both *After the Revival* (Wilkinson and Ambrose) and *The Century of the Holy Spirit* (Synan) provide ample ground for this claim.

<sup>312</sup> Consider the totality of the damage wrought within the experiences catalogued in Table 2.1 (Experiences of Indifference), Table 2.2 (Experiences of Inequality), Table 2.3 (Experiences of Indignity) and Table 2.4 (Experiences of Illegal Behaviour).

<sup>313</sup> When efficiency is prioritized, only ethical standards that impose a loss of efficiency are factored. Thus, it is always more efficient to operate within the law, up until breaking the law carries no consequence.

associated with the acknowledgment of such sins as have been articulated in this research is the perceived nullification of ministry work that so many have devoted their lives to (and with it, the belief of God's supernatural presence within that work).

I propose that the way forward is not in an indiscriminate invalidation of more than 100 years of Pentecostal ministry in North America, but rather the intentional development of a renewed praxis that empowers effective gospel-centered work because of its clergy ethics, and not in spite of them. Achieving this result involves an epistemological shift: away from unreflective pragmatism and toward theological integration.

In action, this renewed praxis centers on answering the question, "In this particular time and place, what might it look like to be faithful to God in my treatment of this person?" Further, when faced with great difficulty, it asks, "As a person (or executive body) with significant power, what does it look like to care for those whom God has entrusted to us in the midst of this crisis?"<sup>314</sup> Of course, the answer must be reflectively rooted in both a better model of power and an anthropologically informed Christian ethic.<sup>315</sup> This renewed praxis of Christian leadership is judged faithful by measuring whether the character and demeanour of those in power faithfully reflect that of the God in whose name they serve, using all powers according to the kindness, truthfulness and goodness demonstrated in Christ.

The prioritizing of care for human beings (who are made in God's image) over the preservation of the institution (which is not made in God's image) does not ignore the fiduciary responsibility associated with institutional governance; rather it appropriately catalyzes it, aligning embedded processes with normative Christian ethics. For those who claim the name of God, the ethical determination of the right use of power considers humans as fundamentally inviolable, exercising positional power with the

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<sup>314</sup> This question might serve as a starting point for pragmatic challenges such as budget shortfalls, leadership conflicts, or disciplinary matters. As every question presumes something of the answer, beginning here (with an anthropocentric Christian ethic) sets a trajectory for actions capable of integrating theologically normative priorities.

<sup>315</sup> As discussed previously in this chapter, a Christian model of power ought to be an expression of love where power is an entrusted gift, with which one might serve others.

wellbeing, dignity and flourishing of others as the highest fiduciary duty.  
This is what it means to “Rightly Bear God’s Name”.

# Chapter 5:

## Conclusion and Recommendations

### 1. Chapter Overview

While the renewed praxis described in chapter four provides a model for engaging change, the specificities of the research data present an opportunity to prescribe fixed recommended practices that might address some of the basic functional deficiencies underlying the abuse of power. This chapter concludes this study by presenting the recommendations that have emerged from analysis of the data in the light of the relevant literature, as well as the embedded consensus emerging from the research participants own answers to the question, “In the light of your experience, what would you like to see change in the PAOC?”<sup>316</sup> The implementation of best practices is an important step in reforming systems where the misuse of power has been demonstrated; as James Poling notes, even small institutional changes are acts of redemptive power.

Those who are powerful can organize societies in such a way that those who are vulnerable are denied the full resources that life has to offer. Abuse of power relies on institutions and ideologies.<sup>317</sup>

This chapter is organized into three broad sections: recommended practices, the challenge of narcissism, and “an attitude of grace”, which seeks to answer the question of how the renewed praxis might be applied to those

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<sup>316</sup> While prior caution against legislating practical change in isolation still stands (theologically renewed praxis requires dialogue between the theoretical and the practical), as an extension of the analysis completed in chapter four these recommendations are presented as a “first step” to change. They are not all encompassing. To that end, while policies or procedures on their own cannot change the heart of a leader who has misused power in a significant way, they do provide a slow introduction to transformation. Should those in power find themselves honouring the personhood of their subordinates more fully, even if only due to mandated processes, they are still participating (no matter how small) in the application of normative theological anthropology. Thus, the value of better policies should not be underestimated as they may be the first means by which stubborn leaders experience God’s promise to “remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh” (Ezekiel 36:26).

<sup>317</sup> Poling, 29.



who find their past behaviour squarely confronted within this work. Finally, a concluding summary is provided as the last word. As chapter four has spoken clearly to the ideological considerations of this study, we now turn our attention to the institution.

## **2. Recommended Practices for the PAOC in 2024 and Beyond**

Despite the diversity of the sample and its experiences, a common set of recommended practices address the vast majority of issues raised. The following recommendations represent minimum steps that, if taken, would have significantly mitigated harm, or provided recourse.

### **A. Acknowledgement of Complicity**

There is a general sentiment in the sample that the PAOC (as an institution) is unwilling to acknowledge the scope and impact of the harm clergy have experienced as a direct result of the misuse of power. Sadly, the debate over whether abuse of power in the PAOC is an actual problem, or merely an exaggerated concern stemming from a small number of individuals, continues to surface in multiple forums.<sup>318</sup> While recent public initiatives to address and explore the issue of abuse of power are important, there has yet to be a statement which includes any admission of culpability on behalf of the institution.<sup>319</sup> Dave's remarks at the conclusion of his interview are unsurprising. "I feel like the PAOC needs to recognize [this problem] publicly. And apologize. I think there needs to be a public apology".<sup>320</sup>

As the silencing of clergy, after already being mistreated, was unequivocally experienced as a second assault, the antipodal response has the potential to be equally powerful in the task of healing and restoration. In much the same way that passivity and indifference can exacerbate the pain of

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<sup>318</sup> Private source.

<sup>319</sup> This is no small matter considering the prevalence of "Passivity (Systemic)" within the research data.

<sup>320</sup> Interview transcript, S1P11.

these experiences, acknowledgment is the first step in the reconciliatory process. The emotional and psychological distress that abused clergy have endured has largely been addressed through a significant number of hours with professional therapists, a cost overwhelmingly borne by the victims of the abuse themselves.<sup>321</sup> As a practical acknowledgment of complicity, the District and General Conferences must also develop a fund to offset and reimburse the cost of psychotherapy for current and former clergy whose emotional and spiritual injuries are directly related to systemic passivity.

## **B. Continuing Education**

Multiple participants (all with senior leadership experience) raised significant questions regarding the absence of mandatory and continuing professional education in the PAOC, particularly when coupled with a lack of available college or seminary material on relevant subjects.<sup>322</sup> One lead pastor of a large, multi-staff church specifically noted, “I’ve never had any HR training or power-differential training [as a lead pastor]. Why isn’t continuing education required as part of credential renewal?”<sup>323</sup> Another remarked that they were surprised to receive no resources when they entered a lead pastor role and further acknowledged there was no system of accountability for how they treated their staff.<sup>324</sup> A further demonstration of this training gap surfaces in the occurrence of illegal and inappropriate lines of questioning during employment interviews.<sup>325</sup>

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<sup>321</sup> Psychotherapy benefits in the PAOC vary but are inadequate to cover extended therapy related to significant experiences of abuse in the workplace. For example, clergy within the EOND with access to Class P1 Group Benefits received a reimbursement to a maximum of \$400 per calendar year in 2023. Those who resign their credentials following an experience of abuse are unable to access this care.

<sup>322</sup> The subjects identified were employment law, acceptable HR practices, professional ethics (including the ethics which surround power differentials) and basic management.

<sup>323</sup> Source withheld for confidentiality.

<sup>324</sup> Field Notes, S1P11. Similar comment in Interview transcript S1P5.

<sup>325</sup> In addition to experiences described by the participants of the study, during the course of this project the researcher was contacted by a student at a PAOC College who had been interviewed for a position by a panel that included a well-known leader with significant national influence; they reported inappropriate questions related to their partner, future plans regarding children, parental leave, and details about private finances. Upon resisting

Today, every recognized profession in Canada requires continuing education, including self-regulated industries.<sup>326</sup> This puts the PAOC significantly out of step with Canadian expectations of professionalism for those in positions of trust.<sup>327</sup> A continuing education program that includes training on power and ethics is particularly important for senior leaders:

Research on power and compassion/empathy has shown that elevated social power is associated with a diminished reciprocal emotional response to another's sufferings. In other words, the more power a person holds in relation to other people, the less empathy they will have...<sup>328</sup>

At bare minimum, the PAOC must mandate a national continuing education program that offers appropriate certification level training in professional ethics and employment law, correlating to a new by-law standard that would require the completion of such courses prior to appointment to a supervisory role.

### **C. Independent HR**

The significance of labour related mistreatment specifically demonstrates the need for accessible HR professionals. As outlined in chapter two, complaints of employment standard violations are frequent,<sup>329</sup> and the absence of trained HR professionals within most PAOC affiliated entities

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these questions, they were chastised. Such anecdotes appear to be common and may warrant further investigation.

<sup>326</sup> Dolik, "Continuing Education Requirements"; At the time of writing, each regulatory body, including self-regulatory organizations, require all licensed, certified or professional members to complete mandatory continuing education. For a complete list of regulated professions in Canada, see OCASI, "Where Can I Get Information about Regulated Professions?"

<sup>327</sup> This is especially true when considering that other denominations (for example, the Anglican Church of Canada and the Presbyterian Church of Canada) have implemented continuing education policies. See Diocese of Ottawa, "Lay Reader Manual."; Presbyterian Church of Canada, "Continuing Education Requirements."

<sup>328</sup> Langberg, 147, citing Van Kleef et al. 265-284.

<sup>329</sup> These include workplace harassment and discrimination, contract violations, constructive dismissal, and post-departure retaliation in addition to excessive hours and forced volunteerism.

represents an anachronistic liability on multiple levels.<sup>330</sup> As Jennifer, lamented, “I think that in the Christian world, we never want to think that a pastor [would] harassed another pastor, so we don’t build a system in case it happens... [but] in my case, when it did happen, I was asked to lie to people about why I left”.<sup>331</sup> Samantha, commenting specifically on her experiences of sexual harassment, noted, “We can't have conversations with people that are offside from an HR perspective. I don't think it's good enough to just say, “Oh that? That’s just [Name Withheld] talking to me, [as a young female pastor], about sex. There must be consequences for that kind of thing. And we must clearly state that those kinds of conversations aren't appropriate”.<sup>332</sup> Rose noted, “everyone should have an exit interview, and not by the person you were abused by”.<sup>333</sup>

The call for access to an HR department that operates independently from the direct employer was a consistent participant recommendation in response to nearly universal agreement that there is simply no body of advocacy for credential-holders who are not lead pastors during any dispute that involves a power differential.<sup>334</sup> Such a department would also provide a safe avenue for “whistleblower” reports, in addition to serving the fellowship by providing confidential exit-interview services, thus yielding data that may play a role in strategies to improve overall clergy retention.

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<sup>330</sup> The consistent failure of employers to provide subordinate clergy within the sample with even the most basic labour standards afforded to them by Canadian law is well documented. Other HR functions, such as handling complaints of misconduct, are likewise not adequately managed via present means. The sample further included multiple accounts of district officers operating in bad faith or with conflict of interest in the favour of a personal friend. For additional examples of labour complaints, see Table 2.2.

<sup>331</sup> Interview transcript.

<sup>332</sup> Interview transcript.

<sup>333</sup> Interview transcript.

<sup>334</sup> Tom noted specifically that there is truth to the perception of district favouritism for lead pastors, and cites a significant (and pleasant) change in his relationship with the district officers after being appointed a lead pastor. He noted that upon becoming a lead pastor, “I can call anytime... they always have my back.” Tom notes this was not his experience as a youth pastor. One participant lamented that the DE in his district is “a room full of lead pastors protecting other lead pastors”; a sentiment reflected among other participants. It is especially significant to note that female lead pastors interviewed did not report the same level of perceived support from their district officers, who they described as indifferent to them at best.

It is therefore recommended that certified HR professionals, hired under a shared-service model,<sup>335</sup> be empowered with the authority to investigate complaints, mandate legal and policy compliance, recommend disciplinary action, and hold all credential-holders accountable (regardless of role or status) while operating at arm's length from both the local churches and the district offices.

#### **D. Mandated Minimum Compliance**

As recently as August 2023, the PAOC sent an internal email to credential-holders updating the constituency on action-steps related to the working group's recommendation for addressing abuse of power. The email included a video link for "one of several resources to come that would equip pastors, leaders, and ministries by heightening awareness of the rightful use of authority and practical steps to avoid abuses of power."<sup>336</sup> In the video, Tanya Rust, a registered psychotherapist engaged by the PAOC, provides an overview of power dynamics and then recommends that all churches develop a workplace harassment and whistleblower policy that includes the designation of a compliance officer to ensure confidentiality for complainants.

Without discouraging the future development of educational resources, the difficulty with recommended actions, such as this, are their optionality; considering the number of mandatory requirements readily imposed upon PAOC churches, entities, and credential-holders,<sup>337</sup> a special meeting to amend the by-laws in order to require (not recommend) nationalized standard workplace harassment and whistleblower policies must take

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<sup>335</sup> The shared service model is one whereby the expense of operation can be equally divided on a pro-rated basis to all PAOC entities (for example, based on the number of employees). This ensures both affordability and equity, giving all institutions and credential-holders access.

<sup>336</sup> See Appendix 5A.

<sup>337</sup> Notwithstanding By-Law 3.3 which states that "this local church shall have the right to develop policies and procedures which guide its operation," it must be noted that to become an affiliated church several policies and procedures are mandatory, including financial requirements (By-Law 2.1) and complying with provincial non-profit or registered societies legislation and the Federal Tax Act (By-Law 2.4, 2.6).

place.<sup>338</sup> As the General Conference has already amended By-Law 10 to include “abuse of power”, this recommendation presents an opportunity to codify the supportive framework required to fully address the issue. This form of self-regulation is especially needed in light of the unique structure of the PAOC.<sup>339</sup>

Second, as abuse of power is not limited to local church contexts, the video resource did not fully address strategies of mitigation for power abuse perpetuated by district or national personnel. Legislating best practices improves all workplaces (whether local, district and national) by limiting the influence of favouritism, establishing clear recourse for those who experience discrimination, and providing a layer of protection for retaliatory action.

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<sup>338</sup> Noting that some of these policies may already be legally required in certain provinces, a national standard would provide all clergy the same level of protection, regardless of their district.

<sup>339</sup> Because the General Constitution is administered by the General Executive, credentials are administered by each District Executive, and employment is administered at the local level, there are multiple loopholes by which employees can be disenfranchised or where they are not protected by law. For example, a member of the clergy can be dismissed at the local level as a result of having their credentials revoked by their district (for any number of reasons related to By-Law 10 in the General Constitution, which is administered by the General Executive, or at a national level). While this structure has been internally noted as essential in order to protect churches from human rights litigation if the termination of a pastor who departs from the PAOC’s statement of faith is required, this structure may also be used to protect all parties from litigation over a bona fide wrongful termination; inversely, it protects the General Executive (who is not a direct employer) from accountability over various points in the General Constitution that may otherwise be unacceptable under Canadian employment law.

A specific example of the abuse of this structure was reported within the sample group: a pastor was discriminated by a credential-holder with significant power and influence based on characteristics protected by the human rights code. When the pastor sought to address this issue, they were first exhorted to “let it go” by their District Superintendent. Refusing, the pastor was then alleged to be “uncooperative” with district leadership, with full awareness that such a charge could constitute a disciplinary hearing that might result in removal of credentials, leading the pastor to then be terminated by their direct employer, who would be shielded from liability (they are merely terminating a pastor who no longer holds credentials). A lack of confidence in the impartiality of a disciplinary panel, should the charge have been filed, weighted heavily on the discriminated pastor. In this case, the organizational structure of the PAOC was weaponized in order to limit the option of recourse for a pastor; simultaneously denying their Charter Rights as a Canadian.

## **E. Prohibition of NDAs**

As noted in chapter two,<sup>340</sup> there does not appear to be a single legitimate ethical use for NDAs within the ecclesial context. Despite this, there are multiple references to NDAs within the sample; in each case, they were used to protect the institution or a powerful leader from accountability for misconduct. In this light, it is recommended that a resolution be brought before the General Conference of the PAOC to universally prohibit the use of NDAs within the denomination, a course of action already overdue.<sup>341</sup>

## **F. Theological Renewal**

As noted throughout this study, the minimization of theological anthropology in the formal doctrinal expressions of the PAOC is echoed in espoused voices of the movement. Notwithstanding the breadth of Christian theology and the need for a concise statement of faith, a formal commission of trained Pentecostal theologians to the production of a new position paper on power, anthropology, and ethics (with accompanying recommendation of amendment to the SOET) is required. While operant practices may be initially reformed by policies and mandates, for the PAOC to develop a truly renewed operant theology, formal work must be done and then reflected into the espoused voice of the movement.

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<sup>340</sup> See § 6 (D).

<sup>341</sup> As previously noted, the 2023 decision by the Canadian Bar Association to prohibit the use of NDAs for silencing complaints of harassment, abuse and discrimination only furthers this point (Bhat and Schmunk, "Lawyers Across Canada").

### 3. The Challenge of Narcissism<sup>342</sup>

#### A. Identifying the Threat

As noted in the literature, the threat that narcissism presents to religious institutions must not be underestimated. The American Psychological Association lists nine traits associated with pathological narcissism:

1. A grandiose sense of self-importance.
2. A preoccupation with success, power, or brilliance.
3. A belief that they are “special” and elite.
4. An expectation of excessive admiration.
5. A false sense of entitlement (expecting favorable treatment).
6. A willingness to take advantage of others for their own ends.
7. A lack empathy for others.
8. An envious (or inappropriately competitive) outlook.
9. An arrogant, or haughty, attitude and behaviour.<sup>343</sup>

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<sup>342</sup> Clinically speaking, narcissism is a set of pathological traits outlined in the list of DSM-V Cluster B Personality Disorders (included in Appendix 5B for reference). DeGroat notes that this clinical narcissism exists on a scale from “healthy” (confident, but humble; considerate of others) to “toxic” (exploitive, entitled, selfish) or even “malignant” (manipulative, callously indifferent, cruel); further, healthy and toxic traits can be expressed as styles, types and diagnosable pathologies, (DeGroat, 35-37, 41, 51-52). As a result, he cautions the reader from casually applying clinical labels to others, as only clinicians with the proper tools and training should make such diagnosis.



(DeGroat, 36, fig. 2.1)

Notwithstanding this cautionary note, DeGroat is equally adamant that toxic and malignant forms of narcissism present an acute risk to the life and health of the church, a concern supported by the research data collected in this study. It is in this light that the topic of narcissism will be cautiously engaged, with usage of the term “narcissism” and “narcissist” reflecting DeGroat’s own usage throughout his book as a general shorthand for the observable characteristics associated with toxic and malignant behaviours, sometimes called “trait narcissism”. References to “narcissistic pastors” within this section should be understood merely as a reference to pastors who are perceived to be exhibiting the traits associated to DeGroat’s descriptions of the same, and not necessarily pastors who have been specifically diagnosed with NPD (Narcissistic Personality Disorder) by a clinician.

<sup>343</sup> American Psychiatric Association, “What Is Narcissistic Personality Disorder”.



Within these traits lies a particular capacity to exploit the ecclesial system due to assumptions of shared values. A community that presumes the love of neighbour as normative has an especially limited capacity to conceive of leaders who might pursue their own self-interest, regardless of the cost to others. The embedded ethics of the Christian faith, not least of which include an expectation of truthfulness and integrity, are ill prepared to respond such willingness to subvert boundaries and policies through lies and manipulation. Further, the narcissist's core need to reinforce their distorted self-image makes Christian leadership attractive.

A colleague of mine often says that ministry is a magnet for a narcissistic personality—who else would want to speak on behalf of God every week? While the vast majority of people struggle with public speaking, not only do pastors do it regularly, but they do it with “divine authority.”<sup>344</sup>

Within the sample, there is evidence that several participants encountered leaders with traits similar to those described in literature on narcissism. The sample produced multiple overlapping accounts of serial offenders who “spin” the facts into various forms of untruth in order to further their personal agenda and escape accountability,<sup>345</sup> a striking observation considering that typologically, the narcissistic pastor is the ultimate “bullshitter”.<sup>346</sup> Clear examples of other narcissistic behavioural patterns, such as described by Mullen, are also documented repeatedly: for example the “dismantling” of Wayne’s sense of self through “intimidation, humiliation, and outright violence to produce feelings of fear and shame”,<sup>347</sup>

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<sup>344</sup> DeGroat, 19.

<sup>345</sup> In addition to the primary offence, Blodgett would argue that these acts of “bullshitting” represent an important secondary point of moral injury to those affected.

<sup>346</sup> As cited in chapter 3, Blodgett defines “bullshit” as the “false statements that are not necessarily factually untrue but nevertheless have the effect of steering the hearer away from the truth. There are things people say without out the conscious intention of deceiving others but with so little concern for veracity that the truth often ends up being misrepresented anyway... Defined in contrast to liars, bullshitters do not care one way or the other about the truth and deceive their listeners by pretending to be sincere and authentic.” (Blodgett, Location: 1910-1915, 62-63.)

<sup>347</sup> Mullen, 53; Experiences in Table 2.3 are especially indicative of narcissistic-type traits.

an experience shared by Joseph, Mila, Diane, Hans, and Rose.<sup>348</sup> There is an urgent need for an informed strategic response.<sup>349</sup>

## B. Responding to Narcissism in Clergy

In Canada, the subject of psychological screening is a sensitive topic. Rightly, the Human Rights Code protects prospective employees from discrimination on any protected ground, including medical conditions and disabilities.<sup>350</sup> Notwithstanding, there are multiple Canadian institutions which engage in significant psychological suitability screening as part of their hiring processes, though generally this is limited to professions where security clearance is required.<sup>351</sup> This selectivity reflects the legal standard applied to determine whether any form of pre-employment screening is permissible, namely, can it be demonstrated that the screening is directly related to a bona fide requirement for safe and satisfactory completion of the

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<sup>348</sup> A comprehensive comparison to Mullen, DeGroat and Langberg's material to the specific accounts of the participants, including the experiences summarized in chapter two, is alarming. The characteristics of the tactics employed by those alleged to have engaged in misconduct bears significant correlation to the literature.

<sup>349</sup> DeGroat notes that denominations with non-traditional ordination processes that do not require a Master of Divinity at an associated seminary, or where "young leaders are snatched up and deployed without proper training or soul formation, simply because they've been successful in other arenas" (21), are far more likely to see narcissistic exploitation.

The vulnerability of young clergy is exacerbated by their lack of maturity and education (especially those who do not finish their prescribed program before beginning ministry) in addition to the personal sense of indebtedness they experience toward those who have recruited them. In light of the observed interest at the 2022 PAOC General Conference to provide simpler pathways for "called" young people to enter pastoral roles (prior to the completion of even a three-year ministerial diploma) and the arguments made in favour of restructuring of Master's College & Seminary to prioritize "hub churches" for local church-based training in 2024, DeGroat's caution is even more significant.

<sup>350</sup> Cf. *Minds That Matter: Report on the Consultation on Human Rights, Mental Health and Addictions* (Toronto, Ont.: Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2012); "Personality Tests When Hiring: Proceed With Caution," *Essential HR*; CIRA Medical Services, "Balancing Workplace Mental Health Issues And Employee Privacy Rights."

<sup>351</sup> Examples being various departments of the federal government, where information related to national security is at stake, and in the policing sector, where the use of deadly force is foreseeable. (Government of Canada, "Public Service Commission Approval of Psychological Tests."; Royal Canadian Mounted Police, "6. Undergo Medical and Psychological Assessments.")

duties of the job?<sup>352</sup> While the particular traits of NPD are well associated with levels of unacceptable risk for those employed in positions related to national security,<sup>353</sup> it may be far more difficult to reasonably demonstrate that these risks justify psychological screening of potential clergy.<sup>354</sup>

The vulnerability of a person participating in psychological screening is significant; the process creates an enormous power differential with those who have mandated the process, and there's a significant capacity for misuse of both the system and the data generated. Thus, the Canadian regulatory framework, which carefully sets limits on how such tools can be used in relation to employment, is reasonable.<sup>355</sup> In balancing the need to protect the privacy and dignity of individuals with the fiduciary responsibility to mitigate a clear risk to the wellbeing of the wider religious community, an application of the renewed praxis, articulated in chapter four, is appropriate.

Engaging this model, the question can be asked, "How might the PAOC love and serve clergy candidates through the process of risk mitigation?" From this perspective, the development of a confidential, collaborative, and genuinely altruistic framework of comprehensive psychological support, focused on clergy self-awareness and mental health, is ideal. Rather than merely seeking to identifying narcissistic traits,<sup>356</sup> the integration of a regulated and confidential psychological health component into the PAOC credential application process presents an opportunity to proactively invest in

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<sup>352</sup> *Essential HR*, Ibid.

<sup>353</sup> Cf. Olga Shechter and Eric Lang, 2-5; Michael Beshears, "Why Narcissism Cannot Be Ignored by Public Safety Leadership".

<sup>354</sup> Despite both a strong case that religious environments are exceptionally vulnerable to manipulation and DeGroat's own professional experience in administering such screening within the United States, (DeGroat, 19.) there is simply no use case in Canada that would present the assumption this course of action would be appropriate.

<sup>355</sup> Particularly in light of the discussion on models of power, and the priority of anthropocentric ethics in chapter four.

<sup>356</sup> As expressions of narcissism exist on a scale, the mere presence of an elevated NPD score on an assessment ought not to automatically disqualify someone from pastoral work. As DeGroat makes note, those who are self-aware enough to engage in healthy relationships, typically referred to as "healthy narcissists", do have the capacity to make excellent ministers, (32).

the long-term health of all clergy.<sup>357</sup> Perhaps most significantly, this provides an opportunity to mitigate the impact of narcissism via an indirect approach: candidates who exhibit elevated narcissistic traits might be presented with an early and confidential opportunity to address the significant burdens of shame, insecurity and anxiety that often predispose and exacerbate traits related to NPD.<sup>358</sup> Meanwhile, others who demonstrate greater emotional vulnerability to the manipulative tactics of toxic and malignant narcissists might also be proactively educated, and supported, in order to reduce their risk of exploitation. While it is conceivable that a small number of individuals with more significant narcissistic traits may simply refuse to engage in transformative work (or even refuse to participate in a system with a proactive process),<sup>359</sup> the benefit of helping those who are willing to engage psychological help cannot be understated. Coupled with a proactive continuing education program to ensure that the “tactics” of narcissists are exposed and disavowed,<sup>360</sup> the risk of narcissistic manipulation in the PAOC might be greatly reduced.

In regard to current ministers (those already credentialed and serving within the denomination), voluntary access to the same clergy health initiative should be provided. While mandating retroactive participation would be inappropriate, in the case that a credential-holder is found guilty of abuse of power (in accordance with By-Law 10), it is not unreasonable that psychological intervention would be mandated as a responsive measure to determine the nature of the restoration program most appropriate.

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<sup>357</sup> Proactive programs, such as this, are both common and legally sound, and are engaged in the selection, hiring and ongoing support of multiple professionals, including First Responders and those in high-stress business professions (CIRA, “Balancing Workplace Mental Health”).

<sup>358</sup> DeGroat, 19.

<sup>359</sup> As DeGroat notes, “antisocial personality disorder (APD), sometimes called sociopathy, is deeply alarming and painful when it shows up in ecclesial and ministry settings. Indeed, though the DSM-V has not yet recognized it as an official, clinical category, some theorists have chosen the term “malignant narcissism” to describe the narcissist with sociopathic behaviors. Prone to callous indifference, manipulation, and rule breaking, APD shows up often among pastoral predators who use and abuse their power to exploit others” (41). He further notes that those afflicted this way are most likely to select relationships and employment opportunities that demonstrate low resistance to their tendencies.

<sup>360</sup> For an overview of tactics, see Chapter 3 § 4 (A).

Considering the high likelihood that diagnosably narcissistic pastors will abuse power, proceeding to offer restoration to the minister while remaining uninformed by an appropriately administered psychological assessment would be irresponsible.

While the scope and cost of such an initiative may appear daunting, this systematic approach to compassionate and proactive care within the PAOC affords an opportunity for the significant benefits that accompany a wide network of emotionally healthy clergy.

### **C. Responding to Narcissism in the Institution**

While narcissistic traits are most commonly ascribed to individuals, DeGroat notes that impersonal systems, or institutional cultures, can themselves take on the characteristics associated with NPD, influencing leaders to ignore the damage to human beings inflicted by callous policies and priorities.

Narcissistic systems exist for themselves, even though their mission statements and theological beliefs may be filled with the language of service, selflessness, justice, and care... Disconnected from the reality of the system's dysfunction or narcissistic sepsis, the members collude in a collective act of glancing lovingly into the pool of water that reflects back the ideal image, just as a narcissistic pastor might.<sup>361</sup>

DeGroat, Mullen and Langberg further note that depersonalized systems that have internalized narcissistic traits can be even more damaging to individuals than a single narcissist abusing power.<sup>362</sup>

The incongruence between the espoused voice of the PAOC (documented as district and national leaders frequently speaking to the care and concern for all clergy) and the operant voice (as noted, the demonstration

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<sup>361</sup> DeGroat, 24, 105, 104.

<sup>362</sup> Langberg's forward in "Something's Not Right" (xvi) foreshadows her concerns that the abuse of a Christian system multiplies exponentially the damage done by a single perpetrator" (147). Further, Mullen is careful to note the role that systems play in the harm of individuals (24-28). DeGroat's concerns are likewise well documented with two case studies provided on pp. 104-110.

of indifference and the wide proliferation of retaliation to those who report mistreatment) were lamented by participants in this study.<sup>363</sup> Such a gap is indicative of a false institutional self-perception, a core narcissistic trait. Accordingly, the appropriate response is reflective of the approach to the effective intervention of an individual: gracious but unflinching honesty, or “speaking the truth in love”.<sup>364</sup> Objective assessments, along with open dialogue and a refusal to “bullshit” are essential.

#### **D. Committing to an Anthropocentric Christian Ethic**

The commitment to realign, whether individually or institutionally, with anthropocentric Christian ethics provides the antithesis of narcissism: a commitment to a cruciform model of power, expressed in love. While previously discussed in chapter four, it bears repeating that the expedient exercise of power to “proclaim the ‘Good News’ and establish new churches,”<sup>365</sup> can no longer be used to excuse collateral damage in the process. While narcissistic pastors and systems might exhibit a seemingly excellent efficiency in the “success” of these initiatives, the exposure of such achievements as hollow and short-term within other denominations and organizations serves as a cautionary tale regarding the cost of narcissistic self-deception within the church.<sup>366</sup>

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<sup>363</sup> It is significant that the research participants provided a composite description of the institutional character of the PAOC using the same terms DeGroat applies to narcissists: unapologetic, indifferent, and capable of both passive and active malevolence when confronted (Ibid., 41). Beyond the individual case studies presented in chapter two, these descriptions were present in a significant form in each interview as a response to the question, “How did your experiences impact your relationship with the PAOC?”

<sup>364</sup> Eph 4:15, NIV.

<sup>365</sup> Wells, “Aligned for Mission.”

<sup>366</sup> Cf. Sasha, “The Secrets of Hillsong”; Taylor, “Carl Lentz, Fired”; Jones, “Hillsong’s High And Low Notes”; Christianity Today, “Who Killed Mars Hill?”; Roys, “James MacDonald Is Fired.”

#### 4. An Attitude of Grace

While section two articulates recommendations related to the care and protection victims of power abuse, attention must also be given to those who have perpetrated the acts. The injuries, direct and vicarious, to those who have experienced or witnessed acts of indifference, inequality, and indignity may predispose those impacted to a reactionary posture. It is, perhaps, only natural to desire punitive accountability for perceived perpetrators.

There is therefore a practical need to formulate a response to the abuse of power that reflects Christ's command to love one's enemy and bless one's persecutors,<sup>367</sup> without further enabling abuse nor ignoring the betrayal associated with mistreatment from those operating in the name of Christ.<sup>368</sup> While the case has been made that ignoring abuse of power is antithetical to Christian ethics, it must also be noted that graciousness for the sinner stands at the epicentre of the same.

The fear of exposure and punishment works against the formation of any healthy system by driving those guilty of offences to hide their misdeeds while continuing to live from the personal dysfunction that led to such transgressions in the first place.<sup>369</sup> Further, in the contemporary era, the phenomenon of "cancel culture" (where certain mistakes demand eternal shaming, with no possibility of redemption),<sup>370</sup> subtly offers its services to Christians as a means for addressing misdeeds. While contributing factors in the formation of abusive tendencies do not absolve a leader of responsibility for their mistreatment of others, they do demonstrate the complexities of the present situation and call for a response toward the perpetrator of abuse that is as equally aligned with the Christian ethos as the other recommendations in this project endeavour to be.<sup>371</sup>

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<sup>367</sup> Matthew 5:43–44; Romans 12:14.

<sup>368</sup> In essence, there is a need to provide an alternative to Albert Poirier's efforts of the same nature in *The Peacemaking Pastor*.

<sup>369</sup> Langberg, 35.

<sup>370</sup> Dudenhoefer, "Is Cancel Culture Effective?"

<sup>371</sup> Considering the role that shame plays in the formation of narcissistic behaviour, and the chronological cross-section of the experiences reported in the research (it should be noted that participants related consistent accounts of abuse of power spanning back to at least the

In order to fully address the systemic risk of power abuse, the fear of exposure must be offset through the provision of an off-ramp from dysfunction: an opportunity for healing and restoration for those who voluntarily recognize their culpability in the gross mistreatment of others. Certainly, as DeGroat notes, “some will resist, and the walls of the hell they’ve chosen will crush them”,<sup>372</sup> yet the promise that “there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent”,<sup>373</sup> must be embraced. Reflecting on the theological anthropology that underpins this study, one cannot fail to recognize that those who have wounded others are nonetheless image-bearers themselves, thus failing to offer the certainty of love and dignity alongside a process of remediation and restitution would be a deep hypocrisy.

As Imes emphasizes, alongside the priority of Israel to “bear the name of the Lord” in righteous faithfulness there is a stunning juxtaposition:

The Israelites had agreed to the terms of the covenant, but God’s first order of business was articulating to Moses the means by which they could be forgiven for breaking that covenant.<sup>374</sup>

A Christian response to sin must reflect this ethos, even as corrective and restorative processes are developed. Shame, that insidious tool of evil, is no more fit for the work of remediation than it is be used as a tool of abuse in the first place. In this light, initiatives to prevent further abuse of power (such as clergy care and continuing education) must remain continuously rooted in an understanding of Christian vocation as a call to care for one another, lest they devolve into strategies to motivate by fear. The task of carefully creating space for the PAOC’s ecclesial community to bear witness to the suffering of the mistreated, while simultaneously refusing to foster hatred and “cancellation” of those who have sinned, is a difficult task only achievable by

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1980s), the likelihood that the even the most prolific perpetrators of abuse of power in the PAOC are also victims of the same is quite significant.

<sup>372</sup> DeGroat, 163.

<sup>373</sup> Luke 15:7

<sup>374</sup> Imes, 67.



the grace of God, and the power of the Holy Spirit; perhaps a task especially appropriate for the Pentecostal church which holds steadfast to the belief such empowerment is available. To this end, a gracious but serious dialogue must take place.

## **5. Research Conclusion**

The purpose of this study has been to examine of experiences of power differentials among PAOC clergy and understand their significance. Locating this study within the discipline of practical theology provided opportunity for theological reflection that addresses the unique context of the PAOC, while also considering the interdisciplinary sources necessary for an informed analysis. As an indicative study, this project makes no formal presumptions regarding the specific quantitative frequency of the participant experiences catalogued within the general body of clergy, but concludes based on the findings, that attention to the scope and specificity of these experiences (including a future quantitative inquiry), by qualified researchers is in order.

The conclusion of this study is that specific experiences of power abuse are common among PAOC clergy, and that the existing structures for safeguarding and remediating these behaviours are inadequate. Further, there is an indication that the leadership body of the denomination is functionally unaware of the gaps between the normative, formal, espoused and operant voices of theology within the movement. In order to arrive at a healthier expression of normative theology (and the resulting ethics), there is a need to foster the development of an ongoing reflective model that might continue to consider the subjects of power, authority, human dignity, and ethics. As the practical recommendations in this chapter are not static, monolithic prescriptions, but rather first steps in a process of dynamic transformation, the researcher acknowledges that a theologically informed transformation of practices, metrics, and internal culture will only be the result of an intentional reframing of power as the means to love one another faithfully.

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## Appendix 1A: Approved Research Ethics Proposal

LST Ethical Research Application for Approval

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### Research involving Human Participants

**Student Name:** Ryan Morgan

**Research Project Title:** Power and Position: Clergy Relationships within the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC)

**Programme of Study:** Master of Theology

**Contact email address:** [REDACTED]

**Research / Dissertation / Project Supervisor's Name:**  
Professor Mark J. Cartledge (S1) and Dr. Christopher Steed (S2)

**Research / Dissertation / Project Supervisor's Contact email:**  
[REDACTED] and [REDACTED]

**Date of Submission of Application:** February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2022

**Anticipated start date for research project:** March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Declaration:

I confirm that I have read and agree to abide by the LST Code of Practice & Policy relating to Research involving human participants.

**Name:** Ryan Morgan

**Date:** January 24, 2021

**Signature:**

**Before completing this application you should have read the LST Code of Practice & Policy relating to research involving human participants. This document will help you complete this your application.**

**1 Introduction: Please give a short introduction to your research proposal.**

This research aims to explore the interpersonal dynamics between credential-holders (“clergy”) within the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC) in regard to the topics of power and positional authority. Through a series of semi-structured interviews, this study will attempt to gain insight into the lived experiences of current and former PAOC Clergy in regard to their relationships with other credential-holders. This research will be used to better understand how the formal and informal structures of power and authority in the PAOC reify and reflect the theological positions of the denomination in regard to the same.

Along with many other Christian institutions, the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada is presently grappling with what can (and must) be done to ensure that abuses of power within its ministry context are both prevented and remediated appropriately when they do occur. In 2021 the General Executive of the PAOC commissioned a working group to address responses to concerns brought forward regarding “abuse of power”, power differentials, and the creation appropriate resources to this topic. The chairman of this working group, the General Secretary-Treasurer of the PAOC, has agreed to endorse this research project and provide access to clergy status and contact information in order to facilitate its completion.

**2 Ethical Concerns: Please demonstrate the ways in which your research will comply with the following elements of our code of practice.**

**2.1 No research should cause harm, and preferably it should benefit participants.**

**2.1.1** As this research is seeking to gain an understanding of the lived experience of clergy in regard to their relationships and experiences with other clergy, around the topics of power and positional authority, the interview may evoke strong emotions for some participants. Depending on their experiences, some participants who have experienced abuse of power could be re-traumatized if appropriate precaution is not taken. For this reason, the methods of this research will be executed with great care so as not to adversely impact the wellbeing of research participants. At all points during the interview, the researcher will remain attentive to the emotional state (verbal and non-verbal cues) of the participant, seeking ongoing consent throughout the interview. In addition to informed written consent, before the interview begins participants will be given a verbal overview of the research project, including the risks of participation and their right to terminate the interview at any time without need for explanation. As part of the preparatory process for research involving human participants, the researcher will also consult with a licensed trauma-informed therapist in order to receive feedback on the questions proposed for the semi-structured interview along with the general methodology of the project.

**2.1.2** For this study, researcher interaction with the participants is essential to the question being investigated. Less intrusive methods of research here would be insufficient as they would either fail to provide enough material to reach a definitive conclusion (for example, there are no archival records available that

cover this inquiry) or they would not be able to explore people's experiences in detail (for example, a questionnaire), creating a risk that participant experiences may be misunderstood or taken out of context. This research assumes an epistemology of Critical-Realism which considers the imperfect nature of the researcher's perception and observations. As a result, this research will take a dialectic approach to the interviews with participants (and to the subject matter in general). The researcher will thus proceed with an "epistemological humility" seeking to genuinely hear and understand the perspectives and information shared by the participants without assuming or overlaying their own experiences into the narrative.

**2.1.3** There are two potential benefits to participants of this research. The semi-structured interviews provide the opportunity for clergy to speak freely and confidentially about experiences that they may otherwise be reluctant to talk about; for those in the ministerial profession, such an opportunity to be heard and listened to carefully may have the positive impact of instigating healthy reflection or a sense of validation. The second benefit is to the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC) who have expressed interest in the conclusions of the research as their working group endeavours to produce a reflection and recommendation for the General Executive on what may be done to address concerns of abuse of power within clergy relationships.

**2.1.4** The researcher will endeavour to be conscious of how his position as a male, middle-class, educated person may impact research methods and participants and an effort will be made to ensure that all participants feel valued, respected and confident in sharing their perspectives. Should any participant report that they have been negatively affected by the research, they will be referred to counselling services through the PAOC Clergy Care network.

**2.2** **Potential participants normally have the right to receive clearly communicated information from the researcher in advance. Please attach to your application a copy of the 'Information Sheet' that will be given to participants.**

See attached.

**2.3** **Participants should be free from coercion of any kind and should not be pressured to participate in a study.**

Participants in this study will be current and former credential-holders within the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC). "Credential-holders" is a broad term used regularly within the PAOC (instead of the blanket term "clergy") to designate anyone who holds a formal ministerial credential, including Ordained Ministers, Licensed Ministers, and those with a Recognition of Ministry Credential (ROM) or a Ministry-Related credential (non-voting). Members who hold credentials may serve in a pastoral context or another ministry roles (such as chaplaincy, district leadership or as a missions worker). Participation in this study will be open to all PAOC credential-holders with ministerial responsibilities. The General Secretary-Treasurer has directed to the appropriate administrative departments to provide the researcher with clergy status records, including lists of those who have chosen to terminate their credentials and withdraw from the PAOC within the last five years. Former credential-holders who have been the subject of formal discipline for ethics breaches and/or criminal charges and had their credentials revoked for such reasons will not be considered for this study.

- 2.3.1** In order to avoid the creation of an inappropriate motivation or coercion, no inducements, financial or otherwise, will be offered in return for participation in this research.
- 2.3.2** The foreseeable risks of participating in this research to participants are declared on the Research Information Sheet for potential participants to consider before consenting to participate. The aim and procedures of this research are not considered to entail an unacceptably high risk to participants or other third parties.
- 2.3.3** Interviews will be conducted over Zoom video conference to avoid the need for reimbursement of travel expenses on the part of participants and to minimize in-person contact in compliance with local COVID-19 mandates.
- 2.3.4** During to beginning the semi-structured interview, prior to asking any questions I will engage the participant in a brief conversation to both ensure that I have their consent and to doubly inform them of their right to end participation at any time, for any reason, with no requirement for explanation. As the interviews will take place via zoom, I will also employ several strategies to empower the participant and reduce any perceived power differentials. Such strategies include designating the participant as a meeting “co-host” in the Zoom meeting, which empowers them to be able to stop the recording at any time. I will also be sensitive to any non-verbal cues of emotional discomfort and offer the opportunity to pause or end the interview if such signs appear.
- 2.4** **Participants in the research study will have the right to give their informed consent before participating.**
- 2.4.1** All participants will be provided with the Research Information Sheet well in advance of an interview being scheduled. No interview will be conducted unless at least 48 hours have passed from the receipt of the Research Information Sheet and any questions resulting have been answered to the satisfaction of the participant. In addition to providing an overview of the study, the Research Information Sheet also contains contact information that the participant may use in order to answer their questions.
- 2.4.2** Prior to their participation, voluntary informed consent, given in writing, must be received from participants. Please see the attached Letter of Consent and Consent Forms that will be distributed.
- 2.4.3** In addition to initially offering information and gaining written consent from participants, I will seek ongoing verbal consent throughout the interview. I will be attentive to anyone who may wish to withdraw consent after completing the written consent form, understanding that this may be difficult or uncomfortable for participants to request. Participants may withdraw their consent either verbally, which will be noted by me in their record, in place of the data I have collected, or by putting their request to me in writing (by email to [REDACTED]). If a participant expresses their withdrawal of consent, all data that belongs to that person will be destroyed.
- 2.4.4** Written consent from participants will be sought for the semi-structured interviews.



- 2.4.5** I will inform participants of my role as researcher using the Research Information Sheet. In the interview, prior to asking any questions I will provide an additional verbal explanation of the same effect.
- 2.5** **Where third parties are affected by the research, informal consent should be obtained.**
- 2.5.1** Although the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada is a self-described fellowship of voluntary affiliation (and is further understood to place a significant emphasis on the independence and autonomy of credential-holders), there is an ethical obligation to engage with the General Executive prior to inviting credential-holders to participate in this study. Therefore I have already conversed with the General Superintendent and the General Secretary-Treasurer (chairman of the working group on the abuse of power) about this study and received their both their endorsement and the promise of their assistance.
- 2.5.2** In meeting with the designate of the General Superintendent (The General Secretary-Treasurer), I have explained both the purpose and the proposed methodology of my research. Pending the authorization of the Ethics Committee, I will have the full support and endorsement of the PAOC to proceed.
- 2.5.3** A written record of the meeting with the General Secretary-Treasurer will be added to my research files, pending the approval of the Ethics Committee of my proposal.
- 2.5.4** Apart from London School of Theology and Middlesex University, I also hold affiliation with Master's College & Seminary (Peterborough, Ontario, Canada) where I am employed as teaching faculty and the Director of the Youth Ministry Major; additionally, I am also a credential-holder with the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada. In order to avoid any conflict of interest I will not approach any credential-holders who are employed by Master's College & Seminary.
- 2.6** The consent of vulnerable participants or their representatives' assent should be actively sought by researchers.
- 2.6.1** This research will not involve children (persons under the age of 18).
- 2.6.2** *See above.*
- 2.6.3** This research will not involve persons who are unable to comprehend the implications of the research.
- 2.6.4** *See above.*
- 2.6.5** I am aware that I am known by some credential-holders within PAOC, but these are peer relationships and are not "dependent" relationships with myself as either a credential-holder or a researcher. I will give my utmost attention to and be appropriately reflexive to the influence of position as a researcher on my peers.
- 2.7** **NOT APPLICABLE**
- 2.8** **Participants' confidentiality and anonymity should be maintained.**
- 2.8.1** At all stages of data collection, the informed consent of participants to use their data for the purposes of the research will be sought. Where confidentiality may

be threatened through accidental disclosure, relevant records will be destroyed. All research data will be destroyed once the project has been marked and approved by the Exam Board.

- 2.8.2** The participants referred to within the final written thesis will be kept confidential. Given that a participant is likely to underestimate the consequences of disclosing their identity in published research, even where permission to disclose identity is offered, my decision shall be to keep all participant's identities confidential.
- 2.8.3** All data obtained as part of this research will be used solely for the purposes of answering the central research question using the methodology outlined in the research proposal. The right of privacy of all participants will be maintained in all uses of the data.
- 2.8.4** All raw data collected as part of this research will be kept confidential and stored securely until the final thesis has been written and examined by the Exam Board, following which all data will be securely destroyed. At no time during this process will participant's private information or raw data be disclosed in any public forum. Where raw data may need to be seen by examiners, as much as possible the data shall be presented in anonymized form (using pseudonyms to replace names of participants).
- 2.8.5** When referring to participants in the thesis, pseudonyms (appropriate to reflect gender and ethnicity) will be used in order to maintain confidentiality while aiding the reader in understanding unique or individually significant data contributed by participants. Contextual information and details in direct quotes will be omitted or appropriately paraphrased if they might conceivably be used to reveal the identity of the participant. This is especially important due to the power of internet search engines that could enable verbatim quotations to be traced or identified if the participant has expressed similar sentiments in an online forum.
- 2.8.6** The following procedures to protect the confidentiality of participants shall be adhered to throughout the research:
  - 2.8.6.1** The research will be undertaken by an individual researcher, without supporting research personnel.
  - 2.8.6.2** Participant data will be coded via the use of pseudonyms to protect the identity of participants. A coded list of real names and pseudonyms will be kept securely until the final written thesis is completed and then subsequently destroyed.
  - 2.8.6.3** Zoom Meeting recordings will only begin after participants have introduced themselves so as not to include their name in recording. Even when the interview is conducted with both conference video and audio, only the audio portion of the zoom recording will be retained. The pseudonym assigned to the participants on their consent form will be used for transcribing audio-recordings. Upon completion of the thesis and examination by the Exam Board, the retained audio recordings and all transcriptions will be securely destroyed.
  - 2.8.6.4** All research data will be stored securely in either a lock-box or safe in the researchers private home, or in a password protected digital storage system to which only the researcher has access.

**2.8.6.5** As this study is directly openly addressing credential-holders within the PAOC, no attempt to disguise the identity of this institution or any of its districts will be made. The names of the participants will be substituted with pseudonyms as noted above. Names of churches or geographical places that could conceivably be used to reveal the identity of a participant will be substituted with an additional appropriate pseudonym (for example, a very small town with only one church may simply be referred to as a “rural church” in the district of note; large cities like Toronto, Vancouver, or Montreal may not require pseudonyms due to the sheer size of their populations and the numerous PAOC churches within them).

**2.8.6.6** As stated above, the raw data and information that could reveal the identity of participants shall be destroyed securely by shredding hardcopies and deleting (including back up files) of digital copies once the project has been marked and approved by the Exam Board.

As digital forms of data pose specific risks to data security, all digital research data will be stored on the researcher’s personal laptop (an exclusive-use device) on an encrypted hard drive protected by a unique, strong password and biometric authenticator. Only cloud services which use a minimum of 128-bit AES end-to-end encryption will be used for data backup. Throughout the entirety of research and writing, this project will comply with the requirements of both the General Data Protection Regulations (UK) and the Privacy Act (Canada).

**2.9 How will you disseminate your research findings/summary to all appropriate parties?**

The research findings will be written into an 30,000-word MTh thesis (including footnotes, excluding front matter and bibliography) which shall be presented to the Exam Board for examination.

In addition to this, a summary of the research findings shall be presented to the participants, the PAOC General Superintendent and the administrators of the PAOC credential-holder Facebook group. All reporting of the research findings will be presented in clear and understandable language which accurately reflects the significance of the study.

**3.0 Please give us any other information that you believe will help us in assessing your application.**

As a credential-holder with the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC) I am bound by the PAOC Ministerial Code of Ethics and will conduct myself accordingly; this is in addition to the requirements of LST’s Research Ethics Policy and Code of Practice.

I am acutely aware of the tension that exists between providing participants with only a general overview of the research focus in order to avoid influencing the result versus the ethical responsibility of providing a thorough and transparent description of the purpose of the research and I am committed to managing this

tension with the utmost care in order to ensure that the human dignity of each participant is upheld and the highest standards of ethical integrity are demonstrated in my research. To this end, I understand that the reception of informed consent must be continuous throughout the research process, that care must be taken to thoroughly and fully answer participant questions, and that extra diligence is required in this case to ensure that the participants are aware of the reason for the generalities in the research description.

I am committed to the execution of ethical research that prioritizes the protection of all participants and the institutions I represent while conducting research (namely, Middlesex University, London School of Theology, Master's College & Seminary and the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada).

**Ensure that you have;**

- 1. Included any other relevant documentation information sheet, letter of consent, consent form, with your application.**
- 2. Completed all the information and signed the declaration on page 1.**

**The interview protocol (questions) should be added as a separate document.**

## Appendix 1B: Semi-Structured Interview Sheet

<b>QUESTION 1. (Context)</b>	
<b>“Tell me a little bit about your ministry journey into ministry.”</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• When did you sense a call into ministry?</li><li>• When did you decide to join the PAOC?</li><li>• Where did you receive your training?</li><li>• When were you ordained?</li><li>• What have the milestones on your journey been up until now? (e.g.: Pastoral postings, parental leaves, national or district involvement, further education, etc.)</li><li>• <b>For those that have cancelled their credentials and left ministry in the PAOC:</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>When did you cancel your credentials?</i></li><li>• <i>What are you doing now instead of ministry?</i></li></ul></li></ul>
<b>FIELD NOTES:</b>	
<b>Emotional State:</b>	

**QUESTION 2. (Significant Experience)**

**“As you know, I’m studying the experiences PAOC pastors have had with other credential-holders when there was a power-differential, and how those experiences have impacted them. Have you had any significant experiences you could share with me? ”**

- Positive or negative?
- As a subordinate or as a supervisor?
- Mitigated or Aggravated (with other parties)?

**FIELD NOTES:**

**Emotional State:**

**OK to Proceed?**

<b>QUESTION 3. (Power Differential)</b>	
<b>“Tell me more about the power differential in that working relationship.”</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would you describe the power dynamics in that work-relationship? (Who had “power”? What power did they have? Why did they have it?)</li> <li>• What kinds of systems or resources were available to you to assist you in navigating the differences in power?</li> <li>• How satisfied were you with the outcome of the situation?</li> <li>• Where did your present understanding of power dynamics come from?</li> </ul>
<b>FIELD NOTES:</b>	
<b>Emotional State:</b>	

<b>QUESTION 4. (PAOC Support)</b>	
<b>“Can you tell me about the impact or influence that the district or national leadership had on this situation?”</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did you reach out to them? (Why or why not?)</li> <li>• Did they respond to you? (What did they say / do?)</li> <li>• Did they get involved? (What were their actions?)</li> <li>• Did you feel satisfied with the process and outcome here?</li> <li>• (How did this impact you personally)</li> </ul>
<b>FIELD NOTES:</b>	
<b>Emotional State: Proceed?</b>	<b>OK to</b>



**QUESTION 5. (Resolution)**

**“Thinking back to the present, how would you describe your relationship with those other credential-holder(s) right now?”**

- Are you satisfied with the state of those relationships?
- Did you feel heard?
- Is there anything “unsaid” that needs to be said?

**FIELD NOTES:**

**Emotional State:**

<b>QUESTION 6. (Vocational Impact)</b>	
<b>“Overall, how did this experience shape your subsequent ministry?”</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ... your connection and commitment to service within the PAOC?</li> <li>• ... your decisions about ministry assignments and pastoral postings?</li> <li>• ... your perspective on power and authority in Christian leadership?</li> </ul>
<b>FIELD NOTES:</b>	
<b>Emotional State:</b>	

<b>QUESTION 7. (Personal Impact)</b>	
<b>“How did this experience shape your personal life?”</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ... your personal sense of faith? / <b>practice of prayer.</b></li> <li>• ... your theological views?</li> <li>• ... your personal wellbeing?</li> <li>• ... your spouse or family?</li> <li>• Past &amp; present.</li> </ul>
<b>FIELD NOTES:</b>	
<b>Emotional State:</b>	<b>OK to Proceed?</b>

<b>QUESTION 8. (Affiliation Impact)</b>	
<b>“Last question; how do you think this experience shaped your relationship with the PAOC?”</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practically (e.g.: engagement), emotionally, theologically (e.g.: variance), politically (e.g.: conference voting, etc.)?</li> <li>• As a direct result of your experiences, are there any systemic or structural changes within the PAOC that you wish to see?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What about bylaw or constitutional changes?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• If your proposed changes were to be adopted, how do you believe that would affect you?</li> </ul>
<b>FIELD NOTES:</b>	
<b>Emotional State:</b>	

## **Appendix 1C: Sample Transcript (Redacted)**

FOR CONFIDENTIALITY REASONS,  
THIS APPENDIX WAS ONLY MADE  
AVAILABLE TO THE EXAMINERS.

IT HAS BEEN PERMANENTLY REMOVED  
FROM THIS ARCHIVED COPY.

## Appendix 1D: Research Information Sheet

### Research Information Sheet

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**Study Title:** Power and Position: Clergy Relationships within the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC)

**Sub-Title:** An Empirical Study of the Interpersonal Dynamics between Credential-holders

You are being invited to take part in a research study. In order to help you decide if you would like to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. For any further information or questions about my research, please do not hesitate to contact me at [REDACTED]. Please take your time in deciding whether or not you wish to take part and feel free to either contact me with your decision or await my follow-up with you. Thank you for your time and consideration.

**Purpose of this Study:**

The purpose of the study is to gain insight into the lived experiences of PAOC credential-holders (and former credential-holders) in regard to their relationships with other credential-holders on the subject of power and position. This research will be used to better understand the formal and informal structures of power and authority in the PAOC and reflect the theological positions of the fellowship in regard to the same. A copy of the completed research, in its final form, will be provided to the PAOC working group that has been established by the General Executive to address responses to the concerns of “abuse of power”, power differentials, and the creation appropriate resources to this topic.

**Why you have been contacted:**

You have been invited to participate in this research based on your status as a credential-holder or former credential-holder in the PAOC who may have had personal or ministerial experiences related to the topic of this study.

**What this Study Involves:**

Should you wish to participate, a written consent form will be supplied to you. Following your agreement, we will schedule one (1) semi-structured interview via zoom video conference. A semi-structured interview is one that consists of pre-planned, open-ended questions. The interview will take approximately 60 – 90 minutes of your time, and your participation will be confidential. In order to address the need for confidentiality, in both the researchers field notes and the completed report, pseudonyms will be used instead of participant names, and any details from the interview that could be used to identify you will be removed. Your interview will be recorded, but only the audio-portion of the recording will be retained by the researcher. All recordings, including back-ups, will be destroyed when the research has concluded (see below for further details). Participants will also have the ability to stop the recording at any time should they wish to do so.

**Disclosure of Risks to You:**

As the experiences of credential-holders in their relationships with other clergy are varied and diverse, and some credential-holders may share personal accounts of events that were negative, distressing, or upsetting at the time, we recognize that participation in this study may evoke strong emotions for some participants. While the opportunity to share ones lived experiences in a context such as this can be profoundly positive, it may also illicit an unforeseen or underestimated emotional response. For this reason, please be aware that should you choose to participate, you may terminate the interview at any time, for any reason, without any need for an explanation and that all participants (current and former credential-holders) may immediately access a crisis counselor or a non-emergency referral to a qualified professional via the Clergy Care Network by calling [REDACTED]. The Clergy Care Network is a free and confidential service that is provided free of charge and neither myself nor the PAOC will be notified if you choose to use this service.

Participants may also withdraw consent for their participation in this research after the fact, up until the time of publication (for more on this, see the Consent Form).

As already mentioned, all information and data obtained from your participation will be kept confidential. Any identifying details will be altered or omitted from the dissertation, and the original recordings and any transcripts of the interviews will be kept securely. The research project and any research data will only be read by myself and the examiners, and any data will be destroyed once the project has been marked and approved by the Exam Board.

If you require further information or have any questions or comments about the research. Please contact my first supervisor, Prof. Dr. Mark Cartledge on [REDACTED]

Thank you for considering taking part.

Yours Sincerely,

Ryan Morgan

## Appendix 1E: Correspondence with the PAOC

Per the discussion in Chapter 1, and the notes in the Research Ethics Proposal, on February 8, 2022 the researcher reached out to the General Superintendent of the PAOC in regard to the research topic (See Figure E.1)

**FIGURE E.1:**  
**E-Mail to General Superintendent**

### 15-min meeting re: research

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From: Ryan Morgan | [REDACTED]

Tuesday, Feb 8, 2022 at 2:37 PM

To: [REDACTED]

Hello [REDACTED]

[For my M.Th Programme] at London School of Theology I'm researching the power dynamics between credential holders in the PAOC. Before I submit my proposal to their ethics committee, could we chat for about 15-minutes?

I'd like to share the research focus with you and get your blessing since this is a sensitive topic.

My proposal is due to the committee February 21st, 2022; if you have any time between now and then please let me know.

Ryan Morgan

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

The Superintendent was happy to forward this request to the Interim General Secretary Treasurer who,



... has been facilitating a working group that is addressing our responses to the concerns regarding “abuse of power”, power differentials, and how to help our constituency to engage appropriate conversations and resources.<sup>1</sup>

The researcher met via videoconference with the Interim General Secretary Treasurer who, on behalf of the Working Group and the General Officers of the PAOC, expressed his support for the project. At that time, he directed the International Office to provide both current and historical credential-change reports in order to assist the researcher in accurately determining the number of clergy who had resigned their credentials in recent years.

During the first series of interviews, begun in June 2022, the researcher developed concerns that reporting the findings of the study, as it related to the allegations of abuse of power participants had made, might be shocking to a wider audience. This led to a second conversation with the Interim General Secretary Treasurer on July 25, 2022. See Figure E.2.

**FIGURE E.2:**  
**Telephone Conversation with Interim General Secretary Treasurer**  
**Researcher’s Notes**

**Telephone Conversation**

**Location:** Nanaimo, BC (around 1:45pm PT)

**Ryan**

1. Expressed concerns that initial findings include descriptions of clergy behaviour that, if accurate, would constitute breaches of employment law, and perhaps criminal law (e.g.: blackmail).
2. When the dissertation is published, following examination, I am concerned about being perceived as desiring to malign the PAOC when that is not the case. I’m also worried that presenting this data, without being invited to do so, could be conceived by some as libelous (despite the integrity of the process).

**[Interim General Secretary Treasurer]**

- I appreciate your concerns.
- The truth needs to be told. The data you’re compiling will be very helpful for the working group.
- You should continue, and present your findings, without concern. I’m happy to send you an email inviting you to share these findings.

---

<sup>1</sup> Private source.

Once again, the Interim General Secretary Treasurer expressed his clear support, encouraging the research to proceed in sharing the findings in full, regardless of what they may contain. Expressing the need to engage the subject of abuse of power within a healthy and theologically reflective framework, he followed this conversation with a written invitation to share the findings of the study (not to restrict access). For this reason, the study will not be embargoed following submission. See Figure E.3.

**FIGURE E.3:  
Invitation to Share Findings**

## Current study

---

From: [REDACTED] Monday, Jul 25, 2022 at 2:35 PM  
To: Ryan Morgan | [REDACTED]

Ryan, great to chat with you today.

Please accept this communication as a formal request to have you share the findings of your study. This information could prove very valuable to the Abuse of Power working group. We understand of course the need to preserve confidentiality, but the **[findings]** would be helpful to the working group in recommending action going forward.

Thanks for the excellent work you are doing. Praying with you for its eternal impact.  
Ron

[REDACTED]  
Interim General Secretary Treasurer  
Secrétaire trésorier général par intérim




2450 Milltower Court, Mississauga, ON Canada L5N 5Z6  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

PLEASE NOTE: This communication, including any attached documentation, is intended only for the recipient(s) to which it is addressed, and may contain confidential, personal, and/or privileged information. Any unauthorized disclosure, copying, or taking action on the contents is strictly prohibited. If you have received this message in error, please notify the sender immediately and delete or destroy the original transmission as well as any subsequent reply. Thank you.

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## Appendix 1F: Participant Interest Survey (Social Media Post)

 **Ryan Morgan**  
June 13, 2022 · 🌐


Thinking back on your ministry (especially as a "young pastor"), what impact have your former bosses, district leaders, or section pastors had on you that have made a long-term impact on your ministry life... and personal life?


In other words, how have PAOC credential-holders who have held a **position of power** (or authority) impacted you personally?




For my research at [London School of Theology](#) I'm studying these interpersonal dynamics... of course, the research interviews will be **strictly confidential** and any details from the interview that could be used to identify participants will be removed.

If you'd be interested in participating, I've set-up a confidential web-form here to share your contact information: <https://forms.office.com/r/██████████>

(Of course, feel free to send this to friends who are no-longer credential-holders but may have some helpful insight into this research topic 🙌)



 Stephen Barkley, Peter Neumann and 11 others 7 comments

 Like  Comment  Send

**Facebook group URL:**

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/paocnlpastors/permalink/897326735001633/>

# Appendix 1G: PAOC Statement of Essential Truths



## STATEMENT OF ESSENTIAL TRUTHS AND POSITIONS AND PRACTICES

Amended by General Conference, May 2022

### ARTICLE 5 STATEMENT OF ESSENTIAL TRUTHS

#### PREAMBLE

This version of the Statement of Essential Truths represents the result of an extensive collaborative process to rephrase and refresh what is most essential to us. As before, we make no claim that this statement covers all biblical truth, nor that the human phraseology employed here is inspired. We recognize as we did at the outset of our movement that there is some diversity of theological thought among us, but we remain committed as a Pentecostal community to the historic creeds of the church, to evangelical convictions of faith, and to the Full Gospel that Christ is Saviour, Healer, Spirit-Baptizer, and Soon Coming King.

#### TRIUNE GOD

There is one God, the creator, who exists eternally in unity as three equal persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup> The triune God is loving, holy, infinite, just, and worthy of all worship.<sup>2</sup>

The Father accomplishes his plan of salvation through both redemption and judgement.<sup>3</sup> All things will be subject to him, and his kingdom will have no end.<sup>4</sup>

The Father sent the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of Mary when she was a virgin.<sup>5</sup> Jesus became fully human while remaining fully God.<sup>6</sup> Anointed by the Spirit, Jesus revealed the Father and the kingdom of God by his sinless life, teaching, and miracles.<sup>7</sup> After he died for our sin, God raised him from the dead, and he is now at the right hand of the Father.<sup>8</sup>

The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son and gives life throughout creation.<sup>9</sup> The Spirit draws people to repentance and new life in Jesus Christ.<sup>10</sup> Through the Spirit's indwelling, the Father and the Son are present to all believers, making them children of God.<sup>11</sup>

#### BIBLE

The Bible, both Old and New Testaments, is the written revelation of God's character and saving purposes for humanity and for all creation.<sup>12</sup> As God's revelation, the entire Bible is true and trustworthy, and is the final and absolute authority for belief and conduct.<sup>13</sup> The Holy Spirit who inspired the Bible enables its interpretation and application.<sup>14</sup>

#### CREATION

God created and sustains the heavens and the earth,<sup>15</sup> which display God's glory. Formed in the image of God, both male and female, humankind is entrusted with the care of God's creation as faithful stewards.<sup>16</sup> As a result of human rebellion, sin and death entered the world, distorting the image of God and all of God's good creation.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Matt 28:19; 2Cor 13:14

<sup>2</sup> Exod 34:6-7; Psa 99:4-5

<sup>3</sup> Exod 6:6; Rom 1:16-18

<sup>4</sup> Psa 103:19; Rev 11:15; Eph 1:10

<sup>5</sup> Matt 1:18-25

<sup>6</sup> John 1:1, 14; Col 1:19; Heb 2:17

<sup>7</sup> John 1:32; 14:7-10; Luke 4:18-19

<sup>8</sup> Acts 2:32-33; Rom 8:34

<sup>9</sup> Psa 104:21-30; Acts 2:33

<sup>10</sup> John 16:7-15

<sup>11</sup> Rom 8:14-17; 1John 3:24

<sup>12</sup> Psa 119; John 20:30-31; Rom 15:4

<sup>13</sup> 2Tim 3:16-17; Heb 4:12

<sup>14</sup> 2Pet 1:20-21; John 16:13; 1Cor 2:12-13

<sup>15</sup> Gen 1:1; Col 1:15-17

<sup>16</sup> Gen 1:26-27

<sup>17</sup> Rom 5:12; 8:20-22

Angels were created as supernatural beings to worship and serve God.<sup>18</sup> Along with Satan, some angels chose to rebel and oppose the purposes of God.<sup>19</sup> Christ gives believers victory over Satan and these demons.<sup>20</sup>

### **SALVATION**

Salvation is available to all people by the loving, redemptive act of the triune God.<sup>21</sup> Through obedience to the Father,<sup>22</sup> Christ gave himself as a ransom.<sup>23</sup> Christ, who had no sin, became sin for us offering himself and shedding his blood on the cross so that in him we might become right with God.<sup>24</sup> The life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ<sup>25</sup> provide the way of salvation for those who, by God's grace, repent from their sin and confess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.<sup>26</sup>

Salvation means to receive the Spirit, to be forgiven, reconciled with God and others, born again, and liberated from sin and darkness, transferring the believer into God's kingdom.<sup>27</sup> Our experience of liberation includes healing — whether spiritual, physical, emotional, or mental — as a foretaste of our future, complete restoration.<sup>28</sup> Those who remain in Christ and do not turn away are assured of salvation on judgement day by the indwelling Holy Spirit,<sup>29</sup> who sanctifies and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.<sup>30</sup>

### **SPIRIT BAPTISM**

On the Day of Pentecost, Jesus poured out the promised Holy Spirit on the church.<sup>31</sup> As his return draws near, Jesus continues to baptize in the Holy Spirit those who are believers.<sup>32</sup> This empowers them to continue his work of proclaiming with speech and action the good news of the arrival and coming of the kingdom of God.<sup>33</sup> This experience is available for everyone, male and female, of every age, status,<sup>34</sup> and ethnicity.<sup>35</sup>

The sign of speaking in tongues indicates that believers have been baptized with the Holy Spirit<sup>36</sup> and signifies the nature of Spirit baptism as empowering our communication, to be his witnesses with speech and action as we continue to pray in the Spirit.<sup>37</sup>

### **THE CHURCH**

Jesus Christ is the head of the church.<sup>38</sup> All who are united with Christ are joined by the Spirit to his body.<sup>39</sup> Each local church is an expression of the universal church whose role is to participate in the mission of God to restore all things.<sup>40</sup>

Central to the church is the shared experience of the transforming presence of God.<sup>41</sup> The church responds with worship, prayer, proclamation, discipleship, and fellowship,<sup>42</sup> including the practices of water baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism by immersion symbolizes the believer's identification with Christ in his death and resurrection.<sup>43</sup> The Lord's Supper symbolizes Christ's body and blood, and our communion as believers. Shared together, it proclaims his death in anticipation of his return.<sup>44</sup>

The Spirit gives all gifts to the church to minister to others in love for the purpose of bearing witness to Christ and for the building up of the church.<sup>45</sup> The Spirit also empowers leaders, both female and male, to equip the church to fulfil its mission and purposes.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Heb 1:14; Psa 103:20

<sup>19</sup> Rev 12:7-9

<sup>20</sup> Acts 10:38; Eph 6:10-13

<sup>21</sup> John 3:16; Gal 4:4-7; Titus 2:11-14

<sup>22</sup> John 8:28-29; Phil 2:8; Heb 5:8

<sup>23</sup> Mark 10:45; 1Tim 2:6

<sup>24</sup> 2Cor 5:21; 1John 3:16

<sup>25</sup> Rom 4:22-25; 5:19; 6:4-5; Heb 7:24-28

<sup>26</sup> Rom 10:9; 1John 1:9; Acts 3:19; 4:12

<sup>27</sup> Eph 2:13-16; Col 1:13-14, 19-20; 1Pet 1:3

<sup>28</sup> Isa 53:4-5; 1Pet 2:24; Psa 147:3; Rom 8:23

<sup>29</sup> Eph 1:13-14; 1John 4:13; Heb 6:5-6; Phil 3:12-14

<sup>30</sup> 1Thess 4:3-4; 1Cor 6:11; Rom 12:1-2; 1Pet 1:2

<sup>31</sup> Luke 24:49; Acts 2:33

<sup>32</sup> Acts 2:38-39; 8:14-17; 19:1-6

<sup>33</sup> Luke 4:18-19, 43; Acts 1:8

<sup>34</sup> Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:17-18, 39

<sup>35</sup> Acts 10:45-46

<sup>36</sup> Acts 2:4; 10:46; 19:6

<sup>37</sup> Acts 1:8; 2:11-43; 4:31; Rom 15:19; 1Cor 14:15

<sup>38</sup> Col 1:18; Matt 16:18

<sup>39</sup> 1Cor 12:12-14

<sup>40</sup> Acts 1:8; Matt 28:18-20; Acts 13:1-3; Rev 21:5

<sup>41</sup> Acts 2:42-43; 1Cor 12:7; Matt 18:20; 2Cor 3:17-18

<sup>42</sup> 1Pet 2:9-10; Col 4:2-6; Acts 2:42

<sup>43</sup> Rom 6:3-8; Matt 28:19

<sup>44</sup> Matt 26:26-29; 1Cor 11:23-26

<sup>45</sup> Acts 8:5-7; 1Cor 12:4-11; 14:12; Heb 2:3-4

<sup>46</sup> Eph 4:11-16; Matt 20:25-28; Acts 2:17-18; 6:2-4; Rom 16:7

## RESTORATION

Our great hope is for the imminent return of Christ in the air to receive his own, both the living who will be transformed, and the dead in Christ who will be resurrected bodily.<sup>47</sup> Christ will complete at his second coming the restoration begun when he initiated God's kingdom at his first coming.<sup>48</sup> Christ will liberate creation from the curse, fulfil God's covenant to Israel, and defeat all powers that oppose God.<sup>49</sup> Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.<sup>50</sup>

Ultimately, God will judge the living and the dead.<sup>51</sup> Such judgement is God's gracious answer to humanity's cry for justice to prevail throughout the earth and is consistent with God's character as loving, holy, and just.<sup>52</sup> The unredeemed will go away into eternal punishment, but the redeemed into eternal life.<sup>53</sup> The redeemed will enjoy the presence of God where there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain.<sup>54</sup> Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!<sup>55</sup>

## ARTICLE 6 POSITIONS AND PRACTICES

### 6.1 MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

Marriage is a provision of God wherein one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others enter into a lifelong relationship<sup>56</sup> through a marriage ceremony that is recognized by the church and legally sanctioned by the state.

Marriage establishes a "one-flesh" relationship<sup>57</sup> that goes beyond a physical union and is more than either a temporary relationship of convenience intended to provide personal pleasure or a contract that binds two people together in a legal partnership. Marriage establishes an emotional and spiritual oneness that enables both partners to respond to the spiritual, physical and social needs of the other.<sup>58</sup> It provides the biblical context for the procreation of children.

Marriage is to be an exclusive relationship that is maintained in purity.<sup>59</sup> It is intended by God to be a permanent relationship. It is a witness to the world of the relationship between Christ and His church.<sup>60</sup>

Marriage requires a commitment of love, perseverance and faith. Because of its sanctity and permanence, marriage should be treated with seriousness and entered into only after counsel and prayer for God's guidance. Christians should marry only those who are believers.<sup>61</sup> An individual who becomes a believer after marriage should remain with his/her partner in peace, and should give witness to the Gospel in the home.<sup>62</sup>

The Bible holds family life as a position of trust and responsibility. The home is a stabilizing force in society, a place of nurture, counsel, and safety for children.<sup>63</sup>

Marriage can only be broken by *porneia*, which is understood as marital unfaithfulness<sup>64</sup> involving adultery, homosexuality, or incest. While the Scriptures give evidence that the marriage vow and "one-flesh" union are broken by such acts and therefore recognize the breaking of the marriage relationship, the Scriptures do recommend that the most desirable option would be reconciliation.<sup>65</sup>

### 6.2 DIVORCE

We believe that divorce is not God's intention. It is God's concession to the "hardness of men's hearts."<sup>66</sup>

<sup>47</sup> 1Thess 4:14-17; 5:1-2

<sup>48</sup> Matt 13:24-41; Rev 11:15-17; Acts 1:6-7; 3:20-21; Rom 11:25-27

<sup>49</sup> Rom 8:19-21; 1Cor 15:20-26

<sup>50</sup> Phil 2:10-11; Isa 45:23

<sup>51</sup> Acts 10:42; 1Pet 4:5

<sup>52</sup> Mal 2:17-3:1; Rev 6:9-11

<sup>53</sup> Matt 25:46; Dan 12:1-2

<sup>54</sup> Isa 25:8-12; Rev 21:3-4

<sup>55</sup> Rev 22:20

<sup>56</sup> Gen 2:24; Matt 19:6

<sup>57</sup> Matt 19:5; Mal 2:15

<sup>58</sup> Gen 2:18; 1Cor 7:2-5; Heb 13:4

<sup>59</sup> Eph 5:3, 26-27

<sup>60</sup> Eph 5:25, 31-32

<sup>61</sup> 2Cor 6:1, 14-15

<sup>62</sup> 1Cor 7:12-14, 16

<sup>63</sup> Eph 6:4

<sup>64</sup> Matt 5:32; 19:9

<sup>65</sup> Eph 4:32

<sup>66</sup> Matt 19:8

We, therefore, discourage divorce by all lawful means and teaching. Our objective is reconciliation and the healing of the marital union wherever possible. Marital unfaithfulness should not be considered so much an occasion or opportunity for divorce but rather an opportunity for Christian grace, forgiveness, and restoration. Divorce in our society is a termination of a marriage through a legal process authorized by the State. While the Church recognizes this legal process as an appropriate means to facilitate the permanent separation of spouses, the Church restricts the idea of divorce, in the sense of dissolution of marriage, to reasons specified in Scripture.

The weight of the biblical record is negative and the explicit statement is made, "God hates divorce."<sup>67</sup> Divorce is more than an action of the courts which breaks the legal contract between partners in a marriage. It is also the fracture of a unique human relationship between a male and a female. Divorce has profound consequences for the children. Divorce is evidence of the sinful nature expressed in human failure. Jesus gives one explicit cause for the dissolution of marriage: *porneia* or marital unfaithfulness.

Where all attempts at reconciliation have failed and a divorce has been finalized, we extend Christ's love and compassion.

**6.3 REMARRIAGE**

Remarriage is the union, legally sanctioned by the State, of one man and one woman, one or both of whom have been previously married. It is regarded as acceptable in Scripture in the event of the death of a former spouse. It is also regarded as acceptable if there has been sexual immorality on the part of the former partner or if the former partner has remarried.

**6.4 GENDER**

We believe in the biblical teaching of God's original and ongoing design for humanity as two distinct sexes, male and female, determined by genetics. The basis and the intent for this is the conviction that the matter of human sexuality and gender is fundamental to biblical anthropology, not merely biblical morality. Due to human sin and brokenness, our experience of our sex and gender is not always that which God the Creator originally designed. In light of this foundational understanding of creation, fall, and redemption, we will avoid any behaviour or alignment with identity that contradicts the biblical teaching. We do not affirm the resolution of tension between one's biological sex and one's experience of gender by the adoption of an identity contradictory with one's birth sex.

**6.5 TITHING**

Tithing was divinely instituted by God under the old covenant and was compulsory upon the people who worshiped God.<sup>68</sup> Under the new covenant we are not bound by arbitrary laws; but the principles of right and wrong, as expressed by the law, are fulfilled in the believer's life through grace. Grace should produce as much as or more than law demanded. Regular systematic giving is clearly taught in the New Testament. It is known as the grace of giving.<sup>69</sup> The gauge or rule of this systematic giving is defined in the Old Testament, known as the law of tithing. All Christians should conscientiously and systematically tithe their income to God.

NOTE: These Articles are excerpts from the General Constitution and Bylaws of The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada and are an integrated part of that governing document.

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<sup>67</sup> Mal 2:16

<sup>68</sup> Lev 27:30-32; Mal 3:10

<sup>69</sup> 2Cor 9:6-15

## Appendix 2A: Credential Changes 2017-2022

	2017- 2018	2018- 2019	2019- 2020	2020- 2021	2021- 2022	5 Year Total
New Credentials	100	140	112	113	95	560
Transfer In	7	13	4	6	14	44
Re-Activated	13	13	4	7	7	44
Reinstated	14	21	7	15	15	72
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>720</b>
Deceased	-28	-48	-41	-30	-61	-208
Dismissed	-3	-2	-7	-2	-3	-17
Transferred Out	-3	-10	-6	-2	-3	-24
Non-Renewed	-35	-38	-58	-80	0	-211
Terminated	0	0	0	0	-37	-37
Resigned	-51	-33	-35	-85	-36	-240
Inactivated	-47	-29	-15	-129	-22	-242
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>-167</b>	<b>-160</b>	<b>-162</b>	<b>-328</b>	<b>-162</b>	<b>-979</b>
<b>Net Change</b>	<b>-33</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>-35</b>	<b>-187</b>	<b>-31</b>	<b>-259</b>



## Appendix 2B: Reaffirmation Statement: Women in Ministry



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*The Executive Officers appointed a working group to create a Statement of Affirmation regarding the equality of women and men in leadership in the PAOC. This is not a new position, but rather reflects our ongoing position, summarizing our understanding of Scripture and our Fellowship's history. This Statement of Affirmation was reviewed, amended and approved by the General Executive in June 2018.<sup>1</sup>*

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### PAOC STATEMENT OF AFFIRMATION REGARDING THE EQUALITY OF WOMEN AND MEN IN LEADERSHIP

#### INTRODUCTION

In 1998 the voting members of The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada adopted a resolution in the decades-long process of considering the role and place of women in credentialed and governing ministry. Women had been ordained in the PAOC since 1984. This resolution now anticipated the full and unlimited involvement of women at all levels of our Fellowship, simply providing for "...gender inclusivity in all matters relating to the credentialing process and qualifications of candidates for the elected offices of District and General Executives."

Two decades later, we recognize that although our accepted, official position is one of equality between women and men, that position has not translated to reality. Women continue to be vastly underrepresented both as vocational pastors and in governing roles at district and national levels, despite female students consistently attending our Bible colleges in significant numbers. There is a gap between our official position and our lived reality.

This paper is a Statement of Affirmation of our egalitarian position, in the context of ministry leadership, with a summary of historical and theological considerations. It is intended to provide a beginning reference point for churches and credential holders who seek clarity regarding what we believe, particularly when they are called upon to make decisions regarding who will fill leadership roles in their contexts. Suggested and referenced resources are listed below; further resources will be developed.

#### OUR HISTORY

Women have been included from the beginning of modern Pentecostalism. On January 1, 1901, Agnes Ozman, a Holiness preacher in Topeka, Kansas, received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, ushering in modern Pentecostal history in North America. In 1906, the Pentecostal experience spread to the Azusa Street Mission, which was gender-inclusive. When the Assemblies of God (AOG) officially organized in the United States in 1914, women constituted nearly one-third of its clergy.

Ellen Hebden received the baptism of the Holy Spirit in November 1906 in Toronto. By 1910, there were 14 new congregations in Canada, most associated with Toronto's Hebden Mission. Viewed as a fulfillment of Joel's promise (Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:17-18), this new day of Pentecost conferred equal responsibility on all people to step into their callings. The January 1908 edition of *The Apostolic Faith* declared, "When our Lord poured out Pentecost, He brought all those faithful women with the other disciples into the upper room, and God baptized them all in the same room and made no difference. All women received the anointed oil of the Holy Ghost and were able to preach the same as men."<sup>2</sup> Men were encouraged to be supportive of women as ministers: "It is contrary to the Scriptures that women should not have her part in the salvation work to which God has called her. We have no right to lay a straw in her way, but to ... encourage the woman in her work."

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<sup>1</sup> Additional resources for reference have been added as of October 25, 2023.

<sup>2</sup> "Who May Prophecy?", *Apostolic Faith* vol. 1, no. 12, 1908.

Early Pentecostal periodicals made “matter-of-fact” reference to women in ministry. In a list of 15 missionaries compiled shortly before The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC) organized in 1919, seven were female. Women were evangelists, pastors, teachers and missionaries. They conducted evangelistic campaigns, planted churches, established schools, and translated Scripture—laying the groundwork for the Fellowship’s expansion throughout Canada and overseas.

In our earliest days, the return of Christ seemed imminent, evangelism was paramount, and regulations less important. However, as time progressed, order was needed to establish doctrine, missionary efforts, and Bible colleges. As organizations grow and structures are put into place, legislation usually entrenches the dominant group’s beliefs. Although women were present when the PAOC was originally chartered in 1919, the first directors were male, and the Memorandum of Agreement declared that the PAOC was to be controlled by ordained elders and pastors, all male.

The pathway to ordination for PAOC women centred on the “authority” conferred by ordination, and the amount of authority women should have. The PAOC Lady Workers credential (later the Ministerial License for Women) required the same preparation as ordination but did not confer the same status. By 1950, women with this credential could vote at General Conferences, and by 1960, could solemnize weddings.

The post-war years saw the church adopt a similar narrative to society in general: women who moved into the public work sphere in the war years were directed back to home life in the 1950s. By the early 1970s there was such concern over the lack of PAOC women in pastoral roles that a commission was struck to study the issue. Women’s ordination was debated in 1978 and 1980; each time the vote did not reach the required two-thirds majority, and additional studies were commissioned. In 1984, Resolution #6 was presented once more. The motion passed with a 90 per cent approval rate, granting ordination but with limited institutional authority. In the December 1984 *Pentecostal Testimony*, C. M. Ward declared, “This step of opening the pulpit to women is not only morally correct but morally mandatory.... It is the will of God to reach souls regardless of the gender employed.”<sup>3</sup> The final constitutional limitation for women was removed at the 1998 General Conference.

As of January 2016, approximately six per cent of credentialed lead pastors in the PAOC are female.

#### THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Differing theological viewpoints exist within evangelicalism concerning the role of women in ministry. Some advocate restricting women’s authority in ministry leadership roles in some way (often identified as the “complementarian” position), while others maintain that women’s roles should be unrestricted in this regard (often identified as the “egalitarian” position). The PAOC celebrates the unique diversity that both women and men bring to the body of Christ, while affirming the egalitarian view that women are to be unrestricted in their role in Christian ministry and may function in equal authority with their male colleagues in leadership. The following addresses some of the more common discussion points used to support our position.

1. God uses people for positions based on ability and call, not gender (Gal. 3:28). We re-affirm that the Day of Pentecost established a “prophethood” of Spirit-empowered believers, with no restrictions on race, social position, or gender (Act 2:16-18; cf. Joel 2:28-29).
2. The creation story indicates mutuality, not hierarchy, with regard to the gender of Adam and Eve. Both were called to bear God’s image and rule creation. The word *ezer*, translated “helper” (Gen. 2:18, 20) does not indicate submission, but rather mutual partnership. It is used repeatedly to describe God as helping others, including Israel (Ex. 18:4, Ps. 124:8). Hierarchy is introduced only post-fall.
3. Women in both OT and NT serve in leadership positions. Examples include Miriam (Ex. 15:20) and Deborah (Jud 4:4) in the OT; Anna (Lk. 2:36, 38), Phoebe (Rom. 16:1,2), Priscilla (Acts 18:26; Rom. 16:3), Euodia and Syntyche (Phil. 4:2), and the chosen lady who appears to be a pastor (2 John 1) in the NT. Special note should be given to Junia (Rom. 16:7) who held the office of an apostle.
4. Paul’s determination was to help churches maintain peace, truth, and reputation in their cultural context. In doing so cultural issues are introduced in Paul’s writings that appear to restrict women’s

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<sup>3</sup> Ward, C. M. “Women Preachers – The Gospel Has No Gender,” *Pentecostal Testimony*, December 1984, 14.

roles in ministry; however, these are best understood as situational to the particular cultural context, rather than universal directives. In other words, while Paul did restrict the role of women in the church in some contexts, these instances need to be understood as temporary accommodations to God's broader intention of having women and men serve as equals in church leadership. The following are examples of how a contextual understanding of some of these difficult passages help identify Paul's instructions as being restricted to particular, exceptional situations involving women in the church, but which should not be taken to mean women's leadership roles should be restricted in all times and places.

- a. 1 Corinthians 11:1-16 – In this passage some difficult issues are raised, including Paul's use of the word "head" (*kephalē*; v.3) to describe a man's relationship to a woman. While debates exist with regard to the definition "head" (i.e., does it indicate "authority" or "source"?), this term's definition is not the ultimate basis on which an interpretation should be based. Instead the overall point of the passage helps identify the cultural nature of Paul's instructions. Women were guided to prophesy with their heads covered in order to preserve appropriate modesty in worship and avoid disharmony (a significant problem in Corinth). Craig Keener notes that in this first-century context, head coverings were often worn by women as a sign of sexual modesty, but it may also be the case that wealthier women in the church were flaunting their hairstyles (with ornaments), in contrast to the hair styles of the lower-class members. In short, the congregation needed to avoid (in this case, among the women) the worldly influences of immodesty with regard to sexuality and/or wealth.

So, Paul appeals to cultural norms that would call the Corinthian women to Christ-like humility and concern for the reputation of the church and other less-privileged believers. It should also be observed that Paul does qualify the headship language in vv. 11-12, emphasizing the mutual interdependence of men and women "in the Lord." Further, it is significant that Paul does not forbid women from prophesying (an authoritative word from God to all congregation members—men and women), but only introduces a simple requirement for women desiring to speak from such a place of authority. In sum, women were not being restricted from a public, speaking ministry role in this passage.

- b. 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 – Paul is instructing the church on maintaining order in corporate worship. Among the many problems in the Corinthian church, one issue was that women were causing disruptions with public questions, likely due to their lack of education on Scriptural matters. (Formal education for women was not common in the first century.) Since 1 Cor. 11 teaches that women can pray and prophesy publicly, the "be silent" instruction cannot be taken literally or applied universally—obviously Paul did allow for some women to speak on some occasions. Further, others (presumably both women and men) are also told to "keep silent" in this chapter: tongue-speakers without an interpreter, and prophets who have had their turn (1 Cor. 14:28, 30). So, Paul cannot be literally calling for some members to never open their mouths. Rather, his point was that public worship should be conducted in an orderly, profitable way, without unnecessary disruption or distraction. Finally, Paul did not restrict women from becoming educated (and perhaps then later being able to contribute publicly), since he tells wives to ask their husbands questions at home so that they might become better informed in a proper setting.

- c. 1 Timothy 2:9-15 – This passage is challenging due to the direct call for women not to teach (men), along with the appeal to the Genesis creation text for support. However, Paul's admonition here occurs in the context of significant false teaching in the Ephesian church, along with other negative cultural influences. Paul raises five issues for women, one of which was an instruction to learn quietly (the other four issues concern wearing expensive clothes, braided hair, gold and pearls—none of which are usually considered rigidly universally applicable). That the call for women to "be silent" falls within this list points to the cultural particularity of the command; to call four items "cultural" and one "universal" seems arbitrary.

So, what was the possible situation giving rise to such a restriction on women teaching? Paul's letters to

Timothy in Ephesus highlight the ever-present danger of false teaching. Especially susceptible were under-educated women, who were prone to being deceived due to their lack of knowledge (1 Tim. 1:3-20; 4:1-7; 6:6-10, 20-21; 2 Tim. 2:17). Exacerbating matters was the likely negative influence of a dominant matriarchal culture in that region, which promoted female superiority, being influenced by the worship of the pagan goddess Artemis.

Artemis was thought to bring new life and to take life away if needed. During childbirth, women often called upon this goddess for preservation and relief. So, in contrast to a false pagan idea that Adam was deceived, and Eve was the superior heroine, Paul writes, "And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression." What is being addressed, then, is not some universal hierarchy of men and women with regard to teaching; rather, what is being addressed is a distorted view that any woman can teach, despite lacking proper training.

Whereas being created or born second does not disqualify anyone from ministry leadership, being in a deceived state or easily susceptible to false teaching does—and this applies to both women and men. Ultimately both Adam and Eve transgressed, and both men and women are in need of redemption from God (and God, not Artemis, is also the one from whom women need to seek preservation during childbirth!) Nowhere does the Bible state or imply that women are more easily deceived or deceptive than men. That Paul did not believe this is demonstrated through the great value he placed on his female ministry colleagues identified elsewhere in his letters.

### **EXPERIENCE**

Experience is not the primary or sole resource for knowing God and His will, but it is one means that God has provided. Experience has shown that women have been called and used by God in all manner of ministry leadership capacities, evidenced by their effectiveness and fruitfulness in ministry for the Lord. This has been true from the beginning of the church until now, even in times when opportunities were limited.

### **CONCLUSION**

We recognize that other fellowships and denominations may hold a differing position regarding the role of women, and it is not our intention to cause division in the larger Body of Christ. Nevertheless, while respecting these differences, and while continuing to respond with kindness and grace, we unequivocally affirm within our Fellowship an egalitarian position that celebrates the unrestricted leadership capacity of women in the church.

In light of the position of The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada that women may indeed be fully credentialed and equipped to lead in any capacity, we commit ourselves to the following actions:

- i. We will encourage local churches and members of our Fellowship to intentionally teach and implement an egalitarian position at the local church level.
- ii. We will intentionally recommend and develop resources as needed to assist our local churches in teaching and implementing an egalitarian position.
- iii. We will intentionally celebrate and welcome the anointing and call of God to vocational ministry on both women and men, at all levels of leadership.

### **REFERENCED RESOURCES**

Boyd, Gregory A. and Paul R. Eddy. *Across the Spectrum: Understanding Issues in Evangelical Theology*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009.

Keener, Craig S. "Head Coverings." In *Dictionary of New Testament Background: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship*, edited by Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter, 442-47. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000.

### **FOR FURTHER REFERENCE**

These resources are offered as suggestions for further understanding. However, they have not been created by nor are they under the purview of the PAOC.

#### **Books:**

Beard, Mary. *Women & Power: A Manifesto*. Liveright, 2017.

Beck, James R. *Two Views on Women in Ministry (Counterpoints: Bible and Theology)*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005.

Johnson, Alan F., ed. *How I Changed My Mind About Women in Leadership*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012.

McKnight, Scot. *Junia Is Not Alone*. Englewood, CO: Patheos Press, 2011. Kindle. McKnight, Scot. *The Blue Parakeet*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008.

Moore, Carolyn. *When Women Lead: Embrace Your Authority, Move Beyond Barriers, and Find Joy in Leading Others*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2022.

Peeler, Amy. *Women and the Gender of God*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2022.

Scorgie, Glen G. *The Journey Back to Eden: Restoring the Creator's Design for Men and Women*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005.

Spencer, Aida Besançon. *Beyond the Curse*. Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 1989.

Witt, William G. *Icons of Christ: A Biblical and Systematic Theology for Women's Ordination*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2021.

**Online Resources:**

[www.juniaproject.com](http://www.juniaproject.com)

[www.cbeinternational.org](http://www.cbeinternational.org)

[www.margmowczko.com](http://www.margmowczko.com)

## Appendix 5A: Constituency Email “The Right Use of Power”

An excerpt from the email with subject, “Rightful Use of Authority Initiatives – Video Resource” (August 21, 2023) is included below.<sup>1</sup>

### Excerpt 1:

We recently communicated our intention as a Fellowship, on the request of the General Executive, to review and improve policies and processes around the rightful use of authority across our Pentecostal family. As part of the initiative, we communicated that we were developing a video as one of several resources to come that would equip pastors, leaders, and ministries by heightening awareness of the rightful use of authority and practical steps to avoid abuses of power. The video’s content was the outcome of earlier instruction provided in a breakout session on the topic at our National Leadership Gathering and Annual General Meeting day on March 21, 2023. We trust that you will find it informative and a good catalyst for further exploration and implementation of appropriate policies in your context.

### Excerpt 2:

As mentioned before, we welcome input and enquiries related to this important subject. It is our desire to ensure that our official constitutions, by-laws, and policies have consistency in their adoption and implementation across the nation. We further desire to provide a means for concerns related to alleged abuses of power to be expressed in good faith, confidentially and without fear of reprisal or subsequent discrimination. Our goal is the implementation of appropriate objective processes that provide care and dignity for both the victim and alleged perpetrator, with resolution that honours the Lord and upholds the highest standard of ministerial conduct.

Respectfully,

PAOC Executive Officers

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<sup>1</sup> As this email was a private communication, limited in its distribution to a list of email addresses maintained by the PAOC, the decision to include excerpts instead of the entirety of the communication is deliberate.

While Canadian Law provides recourse for a breach of confidence if the information publicized is, in fact, confidential and was transmitted in confidence, in this case the subject matter of this email is both public and widely known (See PAOC, “2023 National Leadership Conference” and the embedded video link “PAOC Annual General Meeting”, 30:59-31:53), and the dissemination of this material does not cause harm to the originating party (see Sarah Nadon, “Test For Breach Of Confidence,”; “Breach Of Confidence Claims: Explained,” *Achar Law*). Further, the content of the email is covered under the fair dealing clause of Canadian Copyright Act (*Copyright Act, Revised Statutes of Canada C-42*, vol. 29.4).

Notwithstanding, an embedded video link to private material has been excluded from this Appendix on the basis of the sender’s request that it should not be disseminated publicly.

## Appendix 5B: Narcissism (Criteria)

### A. Significant impairments in personality functioning manifest by:

#### 1. Impairments in self functioning (a or b):

- a. Identity: Excessive reference to others for self-definition and self-esteem regulation; exaggerated self-appraisal may be inflated or deflated, or vacillate between extremes; emotional regulation mirrors fluctuations in self-esteem.
- b. Self-direction: Goal-setting is based on gaining approval from others; personal standards are unreasonably high in order to see oneself as exceptional, or too low based on a sense of entitlement; often unaware of own motivations.

AND

#### 2. Impairments in interpersonal functioning (a or b):

- a. Empathy: Impaired ability to recognize or identify with the feelings and needs of others; excessively attuned to reactions of others, but only if perceived as relevant to self; over or underestimate of own effect on others.
- b. Intimacy: Relationships largely superficial and exist to serve self-esteem regulation; mutuality constrained by little genuine interest in others experiences and predominance of a need for personal gain.

### B. Pathological personality traits in the following domain:

#### 1. Antagonism, characterized by:

- a. Grandiosity: Feelings of entitlement, either overt or covert; self-centeredness; firmly holding to the belief that one is better than others; condescending toward others.
- b. Attention seeking: Excessive attempts to attract and be the focus of the attention of others; admiration seeking.

C. The impairments in personality functioning and the individual's personality trait expression are relatively stable across time and consistent across situations.

D. The impairments in personality functioning and the individual's personality trait expression are not better understood as normative for the individual's developmental stage or sociocultural environment.

E. The impairments in personality functioning and the individual's personality trait expression are not solely due to the direct physiological effects of a substance (e.g., a drug of abuse, medication) or a general medical condition (e.g., severe head trauma)

**SOURCE:** American Psychiatric Association, "DSM-IV and DSM-5 Criteria for the Personality Disorders" (2012), as cited by DeGroat, Chuck. *When Narcissism Comes to Church* (pp. 33-35). InterVarsity Press